The social world of 1 Peter : socio-historical and exegetical studies.

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SOCIO-HISTORICAL AND EXEGETICAL STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the social world of 1 Peter, focusing in particular on the world which its addressees shared with other people in society. Almost half of the letter is devoted to the issue of relationships between Christians and non-Christians. Two aspects of this subject have been neglected in recent Petrine studies. Firstly, insufficient account has been taken of the very different social settings of the relationships in 2:13-17, 2:18-25, 3:1-6 and 3:9-12, and of the different tensions which existed within these relationships. Secondly, little attention has been given to the meaning of "doing good", which is a prominent theme in 1 Peter (2:12, 15, 20; 3:6, 11, 13, 16, 17; 4:19). This thesis hopes to fill both gaps.

Part I sets out the social situation of the addressees, using both socio-historical and socio-scientific methods. These methods are complementary, and are particularly useful for drawing out different aspects of the social dimension which may not be immediately obvious from the text. It will be shown that the addressees needed instruction on how to relate with one another, and with non-Christians, in a situation where they were tempted to withdraw further and further from their relationships with non-Christians.

Part II focuses specifically on relations with non-Christians (2:11-3:17; 4:12-19), using a socio-historical approach. This serves two purposes: to highlight the dilemma which Christians faced in their different relationships with non-Christians, and to ascertain the meaning of "doing good" within the context of each relationship. It will be shown that "doing good" meant different things in different relationships, and that it was a fundamental part of Peter's response to the situation in 1 Peter. Christians had to remain in the world which they shared with non-Christians, and "do good", even if it meant suffering for it, in the hope that their good works would disarm their critics and might even win some over.

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This dissertation contains less than 90,000 words, is the result of my own work, and includes nothing done in collaboration with others.

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My family in Singapore have been very supportive, taking on a greater share of the responsibility in looking after our aged mother while I undertook my PhD research. I regret that my mother, who died in March 1997, is not able to see the fruit of my study.

Lastly, I thank my husband Philip Satterthwaite for his loving support in every way.

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations generally conform to the practice of the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3rd ed.), and H.G. Liddell, R. Scott, H.S. Jones, *Greek-English Dictionary* (Oxford: OUP, 1940). Titles not listed in these works are written out in full.

Unless otherwise indicated, Greek and Latin literary works are cited from the Loeb Classical Library series.

Commentaries on 1 Peter are cited by the names of the commentators only, e.g., Achtemeier, 23. Full titles of the commentaries can be found in the Bibliography.

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PART II

INTRODUCTION

1) The Object of the Study

This thesis examines the social world of 1 Peter. The term "social world" refers to the social environment which the addressees of 1 Peter shared with other people in their society, as well as the world as they perceived it and the significance they gave to it.[1] Much of this thesis is focused on the former, exploring in particular the kind of social relationships which Christians in Asia Minor had with non-Christian governing authorities, fellow citizens, slaveowners, husbands, friends and neighbours.[2]

The issue of social relationships between Christians and non-Christians in 1 Peter is significant because almost half of the letter is devoted to it.[3] 1 Peter is the only NT writing which systematically and thematically addresses the issue of Christians living in a non-Christian society.[4]

While the social dimension of 1 Peter has been the subject of several recent studies, with Elliott's *A Home for the Homeless* marking a watershed in Petrine scholarship,[5] it is perhaps surprising that the significance attributed to relations between Christians and non-Christians in 1 Peter has not been discussed in depth in these studies. Two issues in particular have been neglected.

First, insufficient attention has been given by Petrine scholars to the different social settings of the relationships addressed in 2:13-17, 2:18-25, 3:1-6 and 3:9-12. Recent studies on the social dimension of 1 Peter have tended to treat Christians as a homogeneous group. Elliott, for example, sees the entire Christian community as a conversionist sect, and examines

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[1]cf. W.A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983) 8.

[2]In this thesis, Asia Minor refers to the provinces mentioned in 1:1.

[3]Out of one hundred verses (excluding the greetings at the beginning and the end), forty-five have direct reference to relationships between Christians and non-Christians.

[4]Goppelt, 20.

[5]J.H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990). This 1990 paperback edition contains a new Introduction. Apart from this, there are no changes made to his 1981 edition. Unless otherwise indicated, all references to *Home* are from the 1990 edition.

the interaction between Christians and non-Christians along sectarian lines.[6] On the other hand, Balch focused his attention on the function of the household code, and concentrated mainly on the relationship between husbands and wives in 3:1-6.[7] Prostmeier is one scholar who deals with the different sets of relationships specified in 1 Peter.[8] However he is more concerned with how these relationships serve as models for all Christian behaviour.[9]

These studies fail to appreciate fully 1 Peter's deep concern for Christians in their different relationships with non-Christians. The letter addressed its readers with regard to their different relationships, and so must we. The addressees of 1 Peter were involved in the basic social relationships within their society: those between subjects and governing authorities, between slaves and masters, between wives and husbands, and between friends. These relationships, which were shaped by distinctive social and historical factors and influences, were affected radically by their conversion. Treating all Christians as a homogeneous group can only give us a general picture, blurring the distinctive characteristics of different groups of people. Thus we must examine each relationship on its own to give us a more accurate picture of the effect of conversion on each. This will help us to understand better the problems which different addressees experienced upon their conversion. It is in the light of the dilemmas and tensions between Christians and non-Christians that Peter's instructions in 2:13-17, 2:18-25, 3:1-6 and 3:9-12 must be understood.

In the instructions to Christians concerning their relations with non-Christians, one theme is prominent. 1 Peter exhorts Christians to do good to non-Christians (2:12, 15, 20; 3:6, 11, 13, 16, 17; 4:19). This is another neglected aspect in the study of social relationships between Christians and non-Christians in 1 Peter. While most scholars acknowledge the importance of doing good, they are as silent as 1 Peter when it comes to explaining what it means. The

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[6]Elliott, *Home*, 73-84. Another study by Elliott using anthropological categories of shame and honour also treated the Christians as a whole group, without giving due cognizance to the different groups addressed in 1 Peter: J.H. Elliott, "Disgraced yet Graced: The Gospel according to 1 Peter in the Key of Honor and Shame," *BTB* 24 (1995) 166-178.

[7]D.L. Balch, *Let Wives be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981).

[8]F.-R. Prostmeier, *Handlungsmodelle im ersten Petrusbrief* (Würzburg: Echter, 1990). He has also included in his discussion a treatment of the relationship between elders and young men within the Christian communities (5:1-5).

[9]In chapter 2, he has an initial analysis of the five "table-like instructions," and in chapter 5, there is a second analysis of the five texts, each expounded as "behaviourial models" for all Christians: Prostmeier, *Handlungsmodelle*, 141-180; 385-576.

brief study on good works in 1 Peter by W.C. van Unnik in 1954 is significant,[10] and has been cited frequently without further discussion. A recent study of good works in 1 Peter by Bruce Winter has focused narrowly on 2:14-15; this study throws some light on the meaning of doing good, but one still remains largely in the dark as to the meaning of good works in the rest of the letter.[11]

Thus there is scope for another study of "doing good" in 1 Peter, which examines its meaning in the various relationships between different groups of Christians and non-Christians. Good works performed by Christian citizens in respect of their non-Christian governing authorities and fellow citizens may not be the same as good works done in the context of a relationship between a Christian slave and a non-Christian master or by a Christian wife to her non-Christian husband. Each relationship must be examined separately.

2) Method

Basically two methods have been used for studying aspects of the social world of Graeco-Roman society in relation to the NT. One is the socio-historical approach, which is primarily a social description or reconstruction of certain aspects of Graeco-Roman society using ancient documents. The other is the socio-scientific method, which makes use of models or theories from the social sciences and is concerned with explanations of social facts.[12] For the past two decades or so, most NT studies on social aspects of the ancient world have tended to see both methods as mutually exclusive, and have used either one or the other method.[13]

More recently however several scholars, mainly from the socio-scientific camp, have emphasised the complementary nature of these two approaches. Elliott sees no conflict between a socio-historical approach and the use of socio-scientific tools, for socio-scientific criticism is "an expansion, not a replacement, of the conventional historical-critical method,"

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[10]W.C. van Unnik, "The Teaching of Good Works in 1 Peter," *NTS* 1 (1954/55) 92-110.

[11]B.W. Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 26-40.

[12]The social sciences include sociology, anthropology, sociolinguistics, semiotics, and other related fields.

[13]Some examples of the socio-historical approach are A.D. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1-6* (Leiden: Brill, 1993); P. Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul's Relations with the Corinthians* (Tübingen: J.C.B.Mohr, 1987); G.W. Peterman, *Paul's Gift from Philippi: Conventions of Gift-exchange and Christian Giving* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997). For a comprehensive survey of the use of socio-scientific method since 1973, see J.H. Elliott, *What is Socio-Scientific Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) 21-32.

and it enables one "to advance beyond mere social description and inspired hunches concerning social relationships to social-scientific analysis and explanation."[14] According to Esler, the social sciences are "best seen as a necessary adjunct to established forms of criticism."[15] Horrell has even argued that there is no real distinction between the two methods, and that any attempt to distinguish and separate historical and sociological research should be abandoned. He writes:

> The resources which the social sciences offer should be seen as complementary rather than alternative to historical investigation. I therefore suggest that such research should most appropriately be termed 'socio-historical', a term which indicates both a continuity with the discipline of history and the additional breadth of 'sociological' perspectives.[16]

While I am not convinced that all distinctions between the two methods should be wiped out, I agree that socio-historical and socio-scientific methods are complementary, and that much benefit can be gained from using them together. In this thesis I use both methods hand in hand.

Both the socio-historical and socio-scientific methods have been used in recent Petrine studies. Elliott's landmark work on 1 Peter is important for its contribution to the use of "social-scientific criticism" on a particular biblical text. He defines "social-scientific criticism" as:

> that phase of the exegetical task which analyzes the social and cultural dimensions of the text and of its environmental context through the utilization of the perspectives, theory, models, and research of the social sciences.[17]

In his socio-scientific criticism of 1 Peter, Elliott first paints a social profile of the addressees and their situation. Much of his understanding of the addressees, e.g, their legal, economic and social status, arises from his literal reading of the term πάροικος.[18] After a very brief description of their religious identity, Elliott proceeds immediately to apply two socio-scientific theories, *viz.*, Wilson's sectarian studies and Coser's social conflict theory, to reconstruct the social setting of 1 Peter, and to examine relationships between Christians and

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[14]Elliott, *Home*, xix.

[15]P.F. Esler, *The First Christians in their Social Worlds: Socio-scientific Approaches to NT Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1994) 2.

[16]D.G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996) 31.

[17]Elliott, *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?* 7. In his 1981 edition of *Home*, Elliott used the term "sociological exegesis": *Home*, xix.

[18]Elliott, *Home*, 21-49. For a fuller discussion, see pp. 20-24.

non-Christians and their effect on relationships within the Christian communities.[19]

While Elliott's work brought the social dimension of 1 Peter to the fore and introduced us to fresh perspectives, the main weakness of his social-scientific criticism is his failure to establish a sufficiently strong foundation of social facts upon which to give a socio-scientific explanation. He has fallen into what Edwin Judge calls the "sociological fallacy," and has not answered adequately the basic question: "What are the social facts of life characteristic of the world to which the New Testament belongs?"[20]

Balch also applied socio-scientific studies in 1 Peter.[21] However Balch's contribution in this area appears to be somewhat of an afterthought, developed in opposition to Elliott's use of sectarian studies and social conflict theory. His earlier work on 1 Peter, which was published in the same year as Elliott's *A Home for the Homeless*, adopted a historical approach to examine the function of the Petrine household code.[22] He argues that the social values encapsulated by the household code were essentially those seen as supportive of Roman rule. Foreign religions were considered a danger, in particular those which the Romans feared were encouraging women to break away from their traditional role to attain more freedom. Apologists for these religions responded by assuring the Roman authorities of their obedience. Balch sees the household code as an apology for their conduct, and examines briefly various passages (1:18b; 2:11-12, 14-15; 3:8-9, 15; 4:15) in this light. He examines 3:1-6 at greater length, stating that "the primary concern in 1 Peter is to instruct Christian slaves and wives about relationships to non-Christian members of their households, pagan masters and husbands."[23]

Based on this understanding of the situation in 1 Peter, Balch applied acculturation studies, arguing that the household code embodied conduct which enabled Christians in Asia Minor to assimilate into their pagan society. In using a socio-scientific method, Balch cautions

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[19]For a more detailed discussion of Elliott's *Home*, see pp. 40-53 below.

[20]E.A. Judge, "The Social Identity of the First Christians: A Question of Method in Religious History," *JRH* 11 (1980) 210.

[21]D.L. Balch, "Hellenization/Acculturation in 1 Peter," in C.H. Talbert (ed.), *Perspectives on First Peter* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1986) 79-101. A more detailed discussion can be found on pp. 45-53 below.

[22]Balch, *Wives*.

[23]Balch, *Wives*, 96.

that "the historical-critical method is crucial as an objective check on our subjective opinions."[24]

Balch is right to be cautious about the use of socio-scientific methods. Social and historical facts, to the extent that they can be deduced from ancient documents, must be gathered first before a sociological explanation can be attempted. In this respect, Balch has built a broader foundation of social facts for reconstructing the social situation of 1 Peter than Elliott. However, in my view, Balch does not go far enough. His reconstruction is based mainly on the household code, and in particular on the husband-wife pair. The hostile attitude of the authorities towards foreign religions was only one facet of the social situation. The peculiar tensions which existed within the different social relationships are crucial for a more complete picture of the social situation of 1 Peter. As we shall see in Chapter 5, the pervasive influence of the imperial cult on the lives of ordinary people in Asia Minor is an important factor in the relationship between Christians and their non-Christian governing authorities and fellow citizens. The tensions within a master-slave relationship are significant factors which must also be considered in any study of 2:18-25.[25]

The above shows that both socio-historical and socio-scientific methods can be used hand in hand, but much care must be taken in doing so. Without first establishing adequate socio-historical facts, one's reading of the text tends to rely largely on the socio-scientific model one has chosen. Two other limitations of the socio-scientific method must be noted.[26] One is the danger of anachronism, which may occur when we apply methods and models developed in the study of modern Western societies to Graeco-Roman society as if no significant differences divide the two worlds. The effect of this can be that the text and the NT world "lose their distinctiveness and individuality as phenomena from the unique and unrepeatable past."[27] The other danger is the tendency to reduce a particular historical-religious phenomenon to its purported sociological determinants. These two dangers can be avoided by the use of social history as a complementary tool to a socio-scientific approach.

I begin, then, by applying the socio-historical method to the text of 1 Peter in order to

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[24]Balch, "Hellenization/Acculturation," 80.

[25]See Chapter 6.

[26]S.C. Barton, "Historical Criticism and Social-Scientific Perspectives in New Testament Study," in J.B.Green (ed.), *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 61-89.

[27]Barton, "Historical Criticism," 74.

answer as fully as possible the question: "What are the social facts of life characteristic of the world to which 1 Peter belongs?" My answer to this question will be the subject of Chapter 1 of this thesis. Having ascertained these social facts as clearly as possible, one may apply the appropriate socio-scientific tools ~~are applied~~ to them to ask new questions of the text.

In Chapter 2, I use social network theory and social conflict theory to show the dynamics operating within social relationships, in particular between those in a smaller group or cluster and those in the larger social network, and the effect of conflict on these relationships. Chapter 3 examines the literary genre, with particular emphasis on its implications for the social setting of 1 Peter.

The use of socio-scientific tools gives a fresh perspective to the social situation in 1 Peter. This must be subject to corroboration by the text and socio-historical facts.[28] Part II of this thesis attempts such a corroboration by examining the different relationships between Christians and non-Christians in 2:13-3:12 against their respective socio-historical backgrounds. This helps us to understand the different factors affecting social relationships in the ancient world which gave rise to the dilemmas which Christians faced upon their conversion, and the effect of conflict on these relationships. It will be shown that the effect of conflict in each of these relationships, when viewed from a socio-historical perspective, corroborates the general picture from a socio-scientific viewpoint in Part I.

John Barclay warns us against the 'mirror reading' of NT texts.[29] While he is right to advocate caution, the use of the socio-historical approach in this thesis provides relevant evidence and information which helps us to place 1 Peter in its socio-historical context. Although it does not eliminate all the dangers of 'mirror reading', it may be the best tool we have to study an ancient text with a view to reconstructing its social situation.

3) A Question of Sources

One aspect of the socio-historical approach requires attention, and this concerns the issue of limited ancient literary sources. Most of the ancient sources available to us are from the aristocratic and intellectual part of society. To what extent do these writings represent the way

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[28]Elliott has rightly observed that the use of both methods "serve the purposes of mutual corroboration and critique": *Home*, 7.

[29]J.M.G. Barclay, "Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case," *JSNT* 31 (1987) 73-93.

of life and values of the rest of society?

These writings often refer to social conventions in their society.[30] They also reflect the verbal teaching of the philosophers and intellectuals disseminated to the ordinary people through debates and lectures in public places such as the law courts, market places and the gymnasia.[31] These teachings were often discussed in less formal settings such as leisurely meals of voluntary associations and public feasts, where people from similar and varied backgrounds could meet and talk. The home was another place where patrons and clients would eat and talk, served by household slaves who would have opportunities to hear the conversations at the table. The theatre was another location, where wealthy patrons and common people watched plays which often depicted real life.

People in the villages were not without recourse to the teaching contained in the ancient literary sources available to us. Although some rural communities in Asia Minor retained their indigenous tongues, the common language was Greek. Furthermore, the villages were often quite close to the cities, as the status of a village was defined as a community subordinate to a particular *polis*. These factors indicate that there was some degree of interaction between the city and village.[32] Farmers brought their produce to the markets in town, where they would have opportunities to hear public teaching. It was also not unknown for philosophers to go to the countryside. Musonius Rufus (first century CE), the Stoic teacher of Epictetus and Dio Chrysostom, advocated that young men should work with their teacher on a farm in the country.[33] There were also itinerant moralists, who travelled from place to place teaching on moral themes.

The above suggests both that these ancient literary writings were mediated in various ways to ordinary people, and that they often reflected society as a whole, and are thus relevant for

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[30]Thus, for example, Dio Chrysostom refers to the conventions governing public benefactions in his Thirty-first and Forty-sixth discourses. Seneca's treatise on *Benefits*, which "constitutes the chief bond of human society" (1.4.2), seeks to lay down the rules on social reciprocity in human relations.

[31]F.G. Downing, "*A Bas Les Aristos*: The Relevance of Higher Literature for the Understanding of the Earliest Christian Writings," *NovT* 30 (1988) 212-230. Downing relies on the writings of Dio Chrysostom, Pliny, Epictetus and others: see, for example, Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 12.14; 50.3; 80.2; Pliny, *Ep.* 19.2. His focus is mainly on the urban setting.

[32]Most of the village inscriptions were in Greek, following urban conventions. Evidence of public benefactions could be found in the villages, showing that social conventions regarding social reciprocity applied in both urban and rural areas.

[33]Musonius Rufus, *Fragment* 11. Text and translation in A.J. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation, A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986) 151.

our purpose of reconstructing the social setting of 1 Peter. These sources are further supplemented by epigraphic evidence. A recent two-volume work on Asia Minor by Stephen Mitchell has provided a wealth of useful information based on epigraphic inscriptions, and I draw on his contributions in this thesis.[34] Other recent works on the imperial cult and slavery in Graeco-Roman society have much to contribute to biblical studies.[35]

Thus in this thesis I use both literary and epigraphic evidence from primary and secondary sources. As far as possible, these are limited to the second half of the first century CE. The writings of Dio of Prusa (40--after 112 CE), Plutarch (before 50--after 120 CE), Seneca (4 BCE --65 CE), Epictetus (ca. 55--135 CE), and Pliny the Younger (ca. 61--112 CE) are among those used. Where applicable, writings from an earlier or a later period are used to reinforce or illustrate the material from the second half of the first century CE. Malherbe's caution that literary sources must be treated judiciously, with special attention to the biases of the writers, must be kept in mind constantly.[36]

As far as possible, the sources used are related to Asia Minor. One difficulty is that Asia Minor covered a vast area populated by some eight and a half million people from diverse social, religious, economic and cultural backgrounds. But there are also many shared aspects of life, values and social conventions which are emphasised in this study.

4) The Origin and Unity of 1 Peter

The questions relating to the authorship and the date of 1 Peter are closely linked, and have been the subject of much debate.[37] There is still no scholarly consensus on these matters, and I do not wish to go over old ground. I am inclined to accept Petrine authorship and an early dating.[38] In any event, as we shall see in this study, the issue of date may not be very crucial for the reconstruction of the social setting of 1 Peter.

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[34]S. Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men and God in Asia Minor* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) I & II. It is perhaps surprising that Achtemeier has not referred to this work in his recent commentary on 1 Peter, which is intended as a critical and historical commentary.

[35]S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: CUP, 1984); K.R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* (Bruxelles: Latomus, 1984), and *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994).

[36]A.J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983) 20.

[37]For a good summary of the arguments for the various views, see Achtemeier, 1-50.

[38]Accordingly, in this thesis, the author is referred to as "Peter".

As to the unity of the letter, the emerging scholarly consensus is that 1 Peter must be read as a literary unity. Theories of the composite nature of 1 Peter, like that of Cross propounding a baptismal liturgy, have not found favour in recent Petrine studies.[39] This thesis assumes the literary unity of 1 Peter.[40]

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[39]F.L. Cross, *1 Peter: A Paschal Liturgy* (London: Mowbray, 1954).

[40]The literary genre of 1 Peter is examined in Chapter 3.

PART I

CHAPTER 1

THE ADDRESSEES OF 1 PETER: A SOCIAL PORTRAIT

This thesis examines the social world of Christians in 1 Peter, focusing in particular on that part of their world which they shared with people in society. Part I of this thesis examines the social setting of 1 Peter. This chapter sketches a social portrait of the addressees. Chapter 2 explores the social setting from a socio-scientific perspective. Chapter 3 deals with the issue of literary genre and its implications for social setting.

1 Peter is addressed to Christians in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1:1). The address shows clearly that Peter intended his letter to be an encyclical to Christians spread out in the regions north and west of the Taurus mountain range, which covered an area of about 130,000 square miles. This vast area was populated with some eight and a half million people, who came from a diversity of social, religious, economic and cultural backgrounds. Asia Minor in the first century CE was predominantly rural, although there were many cities mainly in the west.

In dealing with people from such diverse backgrounds, we must proceed with care. Michaels cautions us that the vast geographical area implies that Peter might not have known specifically the ethnic and social composition of his audience, particularly when we bear in mind the great distance between Peter and his addressees.[1] However Peter would have known the general political, economic, cultural, religious and social conditions of the Roman colonies in Asia Minor.[2] He certainly knew about the kind of sufferings his readers were facing, just as he knew of "your brothers throughout the world" who were confronting similar suffering (5:9).

Although our knowledge of first-century Asia Minor may be limited, we can draw on

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[1]Michaels, xlv.

[2]His situation may be compared to that of Paul writing to the Romans: he had not met his addressees, but he knew of the political, economic and social conditions in Rome, and had them in his mind when he wrote: J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (Dallas: Word, 1988) liv.

some data from biblical and extra-biblical sources to reconstruct the social setting of 1 Peter. The first part of this chapter will focus on the social portrait of the addressees. In discussing the characteristics of the addressees, most commentators limit themselves to their ethnic composition, and economic and social status. However this approach paints a very static picture of the Christians in Asia Minor. It overlooks the crucial fact that they were involved in various types of social relationships, which were radically affected when they were converted. This fact constitutes an important element in the social setting of 1 Peter, as we shall see in the second part of this chapter.

1) Ethnic Origin

Were the addressees from a Jewish or a Gentile background?

At first sight, the evidence in the letter appears ambiguous. On the one hand, Peter's description of the pre-conversion life of Christians in 1:17-19 and 4:3-4 points to a predominantly Gentile audience. He speaks of them as having been redeemed from the empty way of life handed down by their forefathers, which included religious rites performed according to the ancestral customs.[3] Debauchery, drunken orgies and idolatry (4:3) would be characteristic of a Gentile and not a Jewish lifestyle.[4]

On the other hand, the considerable number of OT references in the letter (1:16; 2:3-10, 22,24; 3:6, 10-12; 14; 4:18; 5:5) has given rise to the view that the readers were Jews, as Jews would be most familiar with these OT quotations and allusions. However this does not militate against a predominantly Gentile audience, as Gentiles would have been instructed in the OT after their conversion. The OT references are used metaphorically to help Christians in Asia Minor to identify themselves as the chosen people of God.[5]

Thus the addressees were predominantly Gentiles.[6] Next we turn to consider their social

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[3]W.C. van Unnik, "The Critique of Paganism in 1 Peter 1:18," in E.E. Ellis & M. Wilcox (eds.), *Neotestamentica et Semitica: Studies in Honour of Matthew Black* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1969) 129-142.

[4]See pp. 29-35 below.

[5]P.J. Achtemeier, "New-born Babes and Living Stones," in M.P. Horgan & P.J. Kobelski (eds.), *To Touch the Text: Biblical and Related Studies in Honor of Joseph H. Fitzmyer* (New York: Crossroad/Continuum, 1988) 207-236.

[6]There would probably have been some Jewish converts in the congregations, for Jewish settlements had flourished in Asia Minor in the first century CE. Philo states that there were Jewish colonies in most countries, even in "the lands lying far apart, Pamphylia, Cilicia, most of Asia, right up to Bithynia and the corners of Pontus" (*Leg.* 120-121). For Jews in Asia Minor, see P.R. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*

and economic status.

2) Social and Economic Status

Elliott's study of the social and economic status of Christians in 1 Peter has aroused much debate.[7] The main point of contention is his definition of πάροικοι and παρεπίδημοι. He argues that Peter's description of his readers as πάροικοι and παρεπίδημοι reveals their social, legal, economic and religious circumstances.[8] He bases his argument on an extensive word study of both words in their secular and religious uses in the Graeco-Roman world, in the OT and NT, and in rabbinic literature. Elliott concludes that this evidence points to a literal understanding of πάροικοι and παρεπίδημοι as "resident aliens" and "transient strangers" respectively, with implications of social, economic, political and legal estrangement.

Elliott's emphasis on the literal understanding of these two terms must be seen as a reaction against the tendency by some scholars to give these words a spiritual or cosmological meaning, and to translate πάροικοι to mean "pilgrims and exiles in the world."[9] Elliott's main concern is that this view deprives these words of their social content.

While Elliott is right to reject the cosmological view, this does not preclude a figurative meaning of πάροικοι and παρεπίδημοι to describe the estranged condition of Christians upon their conversion. The figurative meaning does not rob these terms of their sociological content. Elliott himself concedes that it is possible for these terms to have both literal and metaphorical connotations:

> In this case, because of the similarity between the social estrangement of both actual resident aliens and other Christians associated with them, the condition of the former provides an image for portraying metaphorically the condition of the entire Christian community. Here the metaphor of *paroikia* draws its rhetorical power from the actuality

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(Cambridge: CUP, 1991); I. Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts in its Diaspora Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 138-152.

[7]For a sample of responses, see B. Holmberg, *Sociology and the New Testament: An Appraisal* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990) 94; P.J. Achtemeier, "Book Review: *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological exegesis of 1 Peter, its situation and strategy*," *JBL* 103 (1984) 130-133; E. Best, "Book Review: *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy*," *SJT* 36 (1983) 554-555. For Elliott's response to these comments, see his new Introduction to the 1990 Paperback Edition in *Home*, xxvi-xxxii.

[8]Elliott, *Home*, 21-49.

[9]Elliott, *Home*, 42-43.

of lived experience.[10]

Although he concedes that the words can bear a figurative meaning, Elliott persists in a literal reading of πάροικοι and παρεπίδημοι, as "no decisive evidence has been provided to prove that this could not have been the case."[11] But he has failed to consider the following points.

First, if πάροικοι is to be taken literally as identifying the addressees as "resident aliens", it is difficult to see why the term is not used alongside παρεπίδημοι in the opening address in 1:1. When Peter addresses them as πάροικοι and παρεπίδημοι in 2:11, he introduces it with ὡς which in 1 Peter is used to identify a metaphorical word or phrase.[12] The omission of ὡς in 1:1 and 1:17 does not negate a metaphorical use, as Elliott claims.[13] That παρεπίδημοι in 1:1 and παροίκια in 1:17 are used metaphorically becomes clear when we consider their immediate contexts.

In 1:1, παρεπίδημοι is used alongside διασπορᾶς and ἐκλεκτοῖς, two terms which Elliott concedes do not function literally according to conventional Jewish usage. Commenting on the use of διασπορά in 1:1 and James 1:1, he writes:

> The noteworthy aspect of both these instances is that this novel usage reflects a stage in the Christian movement in which epithets once proper to Judaism alone ("diaspora," "the twelve tribes," "elect") are expropriated and now are used to designate the Christian community as coheirs or perhaps sole heirs of the legacy of Israel.[14]

Similarly παροικία in 1:17, in its immediate context, emphasises the new status of Christians after conversion rather than their literal position as "resident aliens". Here, the context is that of the transformation in their lives (1:13-16) after redemption by the precious blood of Jesus Christ (1:18-21). Their faith and hope are now in God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. It is in the context of their past, present and future that they are to live as πάροικοι in reverent fear in their time.[15] Elliott himself ~~acknowledges the contrast between~~ distinguishes "present holy from past unholy phases of the Christian's life" in 1:17 and its context.[16]

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[10]Elliott, *Home*, xxix-xxx.

[11]Elliott, *Home*, xxx.

[12]E.g., 2:2,5.

[13]Elliott, *Home*, xxix.

[14]Elliott, *Home*, 38.

[15]Michaels, 62.

[16]Elliott, *Home*, 44.

In 2:11, where Peter addresses his readers as πάροικοι and παρεπίδημοι, the emphasis is also on a contrast between their past and present life. Here again, the exhortation to abstain from sinful desires and to live good lives among pagans is made in the context of the transformation wrought by Christ upon their conversion. Once they were not a people, but after conversion they have become the people of God, a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation (2:9-10). Once they were in darkness, now they have been brought into his wonderful light. Thus Peter's use of πάροικοι and παρεπίδημοι in 1:1 and 1:17, even without the use of ὡς, points not to their actual social status as resident aliens and temporary strangers but to their status and identity as God's people who find themselves alienated from the rest of society after conversion.

The use of πάροικοι and παρεπίδημοι as metaphors to describe the situation of the Christians after conversion does not mean that there are not also social and historical aspects to these terms. This is clear, for example, from the references in 4:3-4 to Christians withdrawing from participation with non-Christians in various social and religious activities, and to the hostile response this has provoked. As a result, Peter's readers find themselves alienated from their own society. Thus, the metaphorical use of πάροικοι and παρεπίδημοι has its social implications.

Secondly, it is not unknown for ancient writers to use πάροικος in a metaphorical sense.[17] Philo, for instance, uses πάροικος and related terms to express the fact that the righteous man is a stranger on earth.[18] Although Elliott dismisses this on the ground that the context in Philo is "a far cry from the social consciousness of apocalyptic Judaism and Christianity,"[19] he cannot deny that πάροικος is also used in the metaphorical sense in ancient writings.

Thirdly, there are many other metaphors in the letter depicting the status of Christians. They are a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, a holy nation; they are also newborn babies.[20] The effect of these metaphors is to construct a general symbolic structure, and it is against this structure that words like πάροικοι must be interpreted.[21]

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[17]See R. Feldmeier, *Die Christen als Fremde: Die Metapher der Fremde in der antiken Welt, im Urchristentum und im 1. Petrusbrief* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1992).

[18]Philo, *Cher.* 120-121.

[19]Elliott, *Home* 32.

[20]See T.W. Martin, *Metaphor and Composition in 1 Peter* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

[21]Achtemeier, "Book Review: *A Home for the Homeless*," 130-133.

Fourthly, Elliott's literal reading of πάροικοι and παρεπίδημοι downplays the radical change that came upon Christians when they were converted. If the addressees were already estranged on account of their status as "resident aliens" and "temporary strangers", then estrangement on account of their conversion should not have been such a shock to them. As Achtemeier rightly points out, the shock of being excluded from their former relationships would have been greater if they had previously been part of that society, rather than being socially marginalised in the first place.[22] Their alienation after conversion would be even more painful, and would make their longing to belong even more urgent.

Thus Elliott's case for a literal reading of πάροικοι and παρεπίδημοι is not as convincing as he asserts. Feldmeier, on the other hand, understood πάροικοι and παρεπίδημοι in a metaphorical sense. He too undertook an extensive word study of these terms in pagan literature, in LXX and in early Jewish writings.[23] According to Feldmeier, the terms refer to their "*Nicht-Identität*", their understanding of their identity as "non-identity", which expressed their differentiation from pagan society.[24] While his word study is helpful and he is right to reject a literal understanding of πάροικοι and παρεπίδημοι, his deduction concerning the "non-identity" of the addressees cannot be readily substantiated from the text.

Nowhere in the text is the "non-identity" of the addressees evident. On the contrary, Peter stresses their corporate identity as a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a people who belonged to God (2:9). It is not their "non-identity" which differentiates them from pagan society, but their identity as God's chosen people. In their relations with non-Christians, they are to preserve their identity as Christian citizens, Christian slaves and Christian wives.

It is in the realm of their social relationships with non-Christians after conversion that Peter addresses his readers figuratively as πάροικοι and παρεπίδημοι. The addressees do not all seem to have been socially and economically deprived. Rather they were apparently of varied social and economic status.[25] Peter's address to slaves (2:18-25) without a corresponding section to masters does not imply a total absence of the latter in the

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[22]Achtemeier, 56.

[23]Feldmeier, *Fremde*, 8-74.

[24]Feldmeier, *Fremde*, 95-104.

[25]Achtemeier, 55-57.

congregations. This passage is concerned primarily with relationships between Christian slaves and their non-Christian masters. There was no necessity for Christian masters to be instructed on their relations with non-Christian slaves because slaves usually took on their masters' religions.[26]

On the other hand, Peter's address to Christian wives (3:1-6), in particular the reference to jewellery and fine clothes, suggests strongly that some of them would have been able to afford such finery. Furthermore, if we take "doing good" in 2:14 to refer to public benefactions,[27] this would also rebut Elliott's proposition that the addressees were all socially, economically and legally deprived.

From the above, we see that the terms πάροικοι and παρεπίδημοι do not define the social and economic status of the addressees of 1 Peter. The addressees will have been predominantly Gentiles from diverse geographical, social and economic backgrounds. But whether they were from urban or rural areas, whether they were slaves or free, men or women, rich or poor, they were all involved in social relationships. These relationships are important to our study of the social setting for, as we shall see below, conversion affected these relationships in a very fundamental way.

3) Social Relationships

In Graeco-Roman society, social relationships were very important in a person's life. According to Cicero (106--43 BCE) there was "nothing more glorious nor of wider range than the solidarity of mankind, that species of alliance and partnership of interests and that actual affection which exists between man and man."[28] This solidarity came into existence at birth, when children experienced love from their parents. The ties of marriage and parenthood bound the family together, and this social alliance

> gradually spreads its influence beyond the home, first by blood relationships, then by connection through marriage, later by friendships, after by the bonds of neighbourhood, then to fellow-citizens and political allies and friends and lastly by embracing the whole of the human race.[29]

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[26]See chapter 6 below.

[27]See chapter 5 below.

[28]Cicero, *Fin.* 5.23.65

[29]Cicero, *Fin.* 5.23.65.

These social ties, which formed the basic bonds of social relationships in Graeco-Roman society, fall broadly into two categories: those within the household, and those outside the household. In the latter category were relationships with friends and neighbours, and relationships in public life, among one's fellow citizens and political allies. Overseeing all these relationships was one's relationship with the gods.

These relationships were so fundamental to Graeco-Roman society that Plutarch (46-120CE) advocated that a child's education should include instruction on how to conduct himself or herself in these relationships:

> how a man must bear himself in his relation with the gods, with his parents, with his elders, with the laws, with strangers, with those in authority, with friends, with women, with children, with servants.[30]

a) In the Household

The household was the most basic unit of society. It consisted of three pairs of relationships: husband and wife, father and children, and master and slave. How these three pairs should relate to one another had been the subject of many ancient literary works.[31] Basically the paterfamilias was the head of the household, exercising authority over his wife, children and slaves. From Aristotle in the 4th century BCE to Seneca in the first century CE, relationships were regulated in this way in the household, both in the village and in the city.

The household was also a religious unit, possessing a distinct identity through the worship of the gods focused on the house.[32] Members of the household worshipped the gods of the paterfamilias. These gods had been handed down ~~the generations~~ from one generation to the next, and worship formed an integral part of family life.

When a wife was converted, she would no longer be able to worship the household gods, thereby rejecting a way of life passed down from ancestors.[33] Harmony with her husband would be broken, for they could no longer agree with each other or have things in common.[34] When a slave became converted and refused to worship his master's gods, he would be

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[30]Plutarch, *Mor.* 7DE.

[31]Balch, *Wives*, 23-59.

[32]See Chapter 7 for a more detailed discussion.

[33]1:18; Achtemeier, 127; Van Unnik, "The Critique of Paganism in 1 Peter 1:18," 140-141.

[34]Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 38.15.

perceived as disobedient and would be punished accordingly.[35]

Thus conversion affected relationships in the household in a significant way. Having withdrawn themselves from worshipping household gods, which was now regarded as idolatry (4:3), how should Christian wives and Christian slaves relate to their non-Christian husbands and non-Christian masters respectively? As Christians, they faced a dilemma in a pagan household, and needed instruction on how to conduct themselves. Peter addresses them specifically in his letter, encouraging them to be submissive and to do good (2:18-20; 3:1,6). This implies that they must not withdraw from their social relationships, but must remain in their non-Christian households and do good.

b) Outside the Household

Outside the household, relationships with friends, neighbours and fellow citizens were very important. In the village, which was in itself a community, people depended on one another for mutual help and exchange of goods and services. The focal point of the village was often the temple, for the gods played a major role in the lives of the inhabitants. Apart from protecting the dead,[36] the gods also regulated the conduct and relationships of the living.[37] For instance, gods were invoked in matters of justice in dealing out punishment for wrongdoers.

Villagers would congregate at the temple to celebrate their religious festivals and to participate in communal worship.[38] Besides the main temple or sanctuary, shrines were erected at the crossroads of farms. At the end of each agricultural year, all the villagers celebrated the festival of *Compitalia*, when sacrifices were offered.[39] The villagers had relied on their gods for good harvests, and now offered sacrifices in return.

In the city, many people were members of voluntary associations.[40] Both the free and the slaves could join these associations, which were common in the first century CE. Generally,

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[35]See Chapter 6 for a more detailed discussion.

[36]Violations of tombs were threatened with fines and divine punishment.

[37]Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I.189.

[38]Mitchell records an annual festival of a goddess and a wine festival in the villages of Nicomedia: *Anatolia*, I.187.

[39]Varro, *Ling.* 6.25; Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.7.35, 37.

[40]These were referred to as *collegia* in Latin, *thiasoi, koina, orgeones, eranoi,* and other terms in Greek.

there were three types of voluntary associations with different functions.[41] First, there was the trade association, comprising people of a common trade.[42] Secondly, there were associations devoted to the worship of specific gods.[43] The third category consisted of clubs for the poor. These were usually burial-insurance societies. Members paid a small fee, and were assured of a proper funeral upon their death.

MacMullen sums up the need of ancient people to set up associations:

> ... the urge to congregate and incorporate themselves inspired philosophers and palace cooks, and every conceivable trade, ethnic minority, religious sect, or social class in every city. Their objects were simple, summed up in the phrase "social security": to have a refuge from loneliness in a very big world, to meet once a month for dinner, to draw pride and strength from numbers, and at the end of life (if one's dues were paid up) to be remembered in a really respectable funeral.[44]

Besides playing an important role in the social life of members, voluntary associations also provided them with the opportunity for religious activities. Most of these associations were organised under the name of a patron divinity.[45] Regular meetings together created a brotherly spirit among members, who could find mutual help in times of need.[46] They would hire or build at their own expense a set of rooms for their meeting place. There they would meet regularly for "pure comradeship."[47]

Apart from social relationships formed within voluntary associations, people in the city

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[41]J. Stambaugh & D.L. Balch, *The New Testament in its Social Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986) 124-126. See J.S. Kloppenborg, "Collegia and *Thiasoi*: Issues in function, taxonomy and membership," in Kloppenborg and S.G. Wilson (eds.), *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 1996) 16-30 for a classification on the basis of membership. He distinguishes associations linked with a household, those formed around a common trade, and those formed around the cult of a deity. Kloppenborg is of the view that all three undertook to bury their dead members.

[42]E.g. an association of silversmiths in Ephesus during the reign of Claudius (41-54 CE): G.H.R. Horsley (ed.), *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* 4 (1987) 7; an association of bankers and traders around 43 CE: *CIL* VI.6797. For a survey of inscriptions relating to trade guilds, see T.R.S. Broughton, "Asia Minor under the Empire, 27 BC - 337 AD," in T. Frank (ed.), *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome* (4 vols.; Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1938) 4.593-902.

[43]Horsley, *New Documents* 3 (1983) 37.

[44]R. MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest and Alienation in the Empire* (London: OUP, 1967) 174.

[45]N. Lewis & M. Reinhold, *Roman Civilisation Sourcebook II: The Empire* (New York: Harper, 1966) 2.272.

[46]Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity,* 88; M.N. Tod, *Sidelights on Greek History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1932) 92.

[47]R. MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations* (New Haven: Yale University Press,, 1974) 77.

participated in various communal religious and social events. Such corporate participation provided a social link between a person and his or her neighbours and other members of the community. A civic priest was appointed annually to take charge of the main city cults and to supervise the celebration of festivals in honour of the local deities. One such event was *Compitalia*, celebrated annually in the city, where chapels were erected at crossroads. According to Dionysius (around 7 BCE), each family contributed towards the sacrifices, which were offered at the crossroad shrines.[48]

Such celebrations involved everyone in the city, and were events which people enjoyed, according to Plutarch: "The pleasantest things that men enjoy are festal days and banquets at the temples, initiations and mystic rites, and prayer and adoration of the gods."[49]

Dio Chrysostom (40--112 CE) exhorts people attending such occasions to be in harmonious relationships with each other:

> ... how much better and more sensible it is at the common religious gatherings and festivals and spectacles to mingle together, joining with one another in common sacrifice and prayer, rather than the opposite, cursing and abusing one another.[50]

One important aspect of their communal activities, both in the city and in the village, was the celebration of imperial festivals. These were often held in conjunction with the festivals of local cults.

Both the city and the village were bound to the superior power of Rome. The five provinces of Asia Minor had gradually come under Rome since 133 BCE, with Asia being the first to be colonised and Cappadocia the last in 17 CE. Bithynia and Pontus had been united as a single provincial unit since 65/63 BCE while Galatia was annexed as a Roman province in 25 BCE.[51] The relationship between the provinces and the emperor was expressed through the imperial cult. Observance of the imperial cult was crucial because it reflected homage and patriotism to the emperor. Also the privileges enjoyed by the provinces depended on the goodwill of Rome.[52]

Cities like Nicomedia, Nicaea, Ancyra, Smyrna and Ephesus were important centres of the

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[48]Dionysius Halicarnassus, *Ant. Rom.* 4.14.3-4.

[49]Plutarch, *Mor.* 169D.

[50]Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 40.28.

[51]A.D. Marco, "The Cities of Asia Minor under the Roman Imperium," *ANRW* II.7.2.658-697.

[52]See chapter 5 below.

imperial cult. Villages also took part in imperial festivals. Mitchell records two specific examples of benefactions relating to the imperial cult in rural areas. One was a benefactor of Apateira, who was honoured for a bequest of land and produce used for celebrating the emperor's birthday. The other came from a village near Philadelphia which issued a decree thanking one M. Antonius Dio for providing imperial sacrifices on Augustus' birthday in 40CE.[53]

Imperial festivals took place annually, most often on the emperor's birthday.[54] Sacrifices were made at imperial temples and sanctuaries. People took part in processions, and as the processions passed by, householders were obliged to sacrifice on small altars outside their homes. Games were held together with feasts and other festivities. The whole city and the whole village participated.

The above shows that social relationships outside the household were also important. These relationships took place in the context of voluntary associations and communal activities which often involved the worship of local deities and the practice of imperial cult. In these gatherings, the people regularly engaged in feasting and revelry.

Before their conversion, Christians in Asia Minor will have been involved in the basic social relationships described above. We turn now to examine their pre-conversion activities as described in 4:3-4; it will emerge that these activities took place in the context of their social relationships with one another, in voluntary associations and in communal feasting and celebrations.

4) Pre-Conversion Activities (4:3-4)

Prima facie, 4:3 appears to be a catalogue of vices similar to those which are found elsewhere in the NT,[55] and in other Greek and Jewish writings.[56] Lists of vices were often accompanied with lists of virtues for the purpose of instruction.[57] In 4:3, there is no corresponding catalogue of virtues. While the list of vices sets down the activities which Christians must

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[53]Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I.184.

[54]Price, *Rituals and Power*, 105.

[55]Mk. 7:21-22; Luke 21:34; Rom. 1:29-32; 13:13; Gal. 5:19-21.

[56]For examples in Greek writings, see Plato, *Rep.* 4.427E; 7.536A; Aristotle, *Rh.* 1.9.4ff. For examples in Jewish writings, see Philo, *Sac.* 15-33; *Cher.* 71, 92; *Conf.* 117; Wisdom of Solomon 14:22-27.

[57]E.g., Gal. 5:19-26.

avoid, it also describes something of the pagan culture from which they have come.[58] Peter uses the term πεπορευμένους to describe their participation in the activities listed in 4:3. In Classical Greek, πορεύομαι can be used metaphorically to speak of a way of life;[59] so too in LXX,[60] and in other Jewish writings.[61] In the NT, the metaphorical use of πορεύομαι is found in ~~confined to~~ and in Luke-Acts. the Petrine epistles and Jude.[62] Apart from 4:3, there are examples at 2 Peter 3:3, See also Luke 1:6, and Acts 9:31 and 14:16. and Jude 16 and 18. In 2 Peter and Jude, ~~these verses~~, πόρεύομαι refers to the habitual conduct or way of life of the ungodly and the scoffers in the last days, who follow their own evil desires (ἐπιθυμίαν) rather than the will of God. The same sense is used in 4:3.

In its immediate context, Peter is speaking of Christ's suffering in 4:1, resuming his thought from 3:18a. It is on the basis of Christ's substitutionary death to reconcile mankind to God that the converted person lives the rest of his life for the will of God. Peter is concerned with the contrast between his readers' way of life before and after conversion, indicated by the distinction between the former period of their lives (ὁ παρεληλυθὼς χρόνος) and the period remaining (τὸν ἐπίλοιπον ἐν σαρκὶ ... χρόνον). In 4:3, he describes their pre-conversion life, in which they did what pagans chose to do (τὸ βούλημα τῶν ἐθνῶν). Upon conversion this life must be put behind them, and Peter emphasises this decisive act of relegation to the past by his use of a perfect infinitive (κατειργάσθαι) and a perfect participle (πεπορευμένους) in 4:3.[63]

Their past life, Peter says, was characterised by debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry, a way of life which they shared with other unbelievers. The verb συντρέχω is used to depict this joint participation.[64] In its figurative meaning, συντρέχω refers to a close association with someone.[65] The use of συντρέχω in 4:4 suggests a mutual

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[58]Davids, 151.

[59]Plato, *Rep.* 2.365B.

[60]It is used to speak of the ways of God in which a man should go (1 Kg. 3:14; 2 Chron. 7:17). Conversely, God's people are commanded to avoid the Gentile way of life (Lev. 18:3; 20:23; 2 Kg. 13:6).

[61]E.g., *Testament of Reuben* 1:6; 4:1.

[62]Paul uses περιπατέω to denote the same idea of a way of life: e.g., Rom. 6:4; 8:4; 1 Cor. 7:17; Gal. 5:16; Phil. 3:17-18.

[63]Michaels, 230.

[64]Τρέχω is also used figuratively in the LXX, e.g., Job 15:26; 16:14; Ps. 119:32.

[65]E.g., 1 Clem. 35:8; Barn. 4:2.

consensus in lifestyle and activities with pagans. It is the withdrawal of Christians from such a consensus that has shocked the pagans (4:4). They are in fact withdrawing from people with whom they had close contact - their own fellow citizens, friends, neighbours and members of their own households.

a) ἀσελγεία and ἐπιθυμία

The activities in which Christians are said to have participated with pagans prior to their conversion are listed in 4:3. ἀσελγεία is used mostly in the physical sense, and in classical Greek, and connotes insolence or violence towards another person.[66] Later it took on the meaning of debauchery and sensuality. Philo uses the word to describe the "licentiousness and wantonness of the women (τῆς τῶν γυναικῶν ἀσελγείας και ἀκολασίας), who had caused the ruin of their paramours, of their bodies through lust, of their souls through impiety."[67]

In the NT the term is used in Mark 7:22, and Galatians 5:19 to depict one of the attributes of the sinful man. In 4:3, it is used in the plural to refer to specific acts of immorality or sensuality.[68]

ἀσελγεία is sometimes coupled with ἐπιθυμία, as in 4:3. ἐπιθυμία is used in three senses.[69] First, as a neutral term, it denotes a desire for food, sexual satisfaction, and desire in general.[70] Secondly, it can be used in a good sense to denote a desire for something good.[71] Thirdly, it can be used in a bad sense of a desire for something forbidden.

When ἐπιθυμία is combined with ἀσελγεία, as in 4:3, it is clearly used in the bad sense.[72] In 2 Peter 2:18, ἀσελγεία coupled with ἐπιθυμία describes the way false teachers ensnare their victims. They entice them with lusts of the flesh and debauchery.

In 4:3, ἐπιθυμίαις means something more specific than ἀνθρώπων ἐπιθυμίαις in 4:2. In 4:2, it is used in the general sense of man's desires, whereas in the following verse it specifies

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[66]Polybius, *Hist.* 1.6.5; 5.28.9.

[67]Philo, *Mos.* 1.305.

[68]Michaels, 231.

[69]*BAGD* 293.

[70]E.g, Luke 15:16; 16:21; 22:15; 1 Thess. 2:17.

[71]E.g., Phil. 1:23; 1 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 6:11.

[72]Hermas, *Vis.* 3.7.2; Polybius, *Hist.* 36.15.4.

the sexual nature of that desire. Thus, both words ἀσελγεία and ἐπιθυμία connote images of debauchery, sensuality, and physical lust.

b) οἰνοφλυγία, κῶμος and πότος

The next group of words are οἰνοφλυγία, κῶμος and πότος. οἰνοφλυγία means drunkenness, and in the plural refers to drunken orgies.[73] Drunkenness and drunken behaviour was widely criticised in the ancient world. Seneca made plain his disapproval when he wrote: "Drunkenness kindles and discloses every kind of vice, and removes the sense of shame that veils our evil undertaking."[74]

Philo too is very critical of the debauched lifestyle of pagans, and his writings give us an outsider's view of the more undesirable aspects of Graeco-Roman life. According to Philo, οἰνοφλυγία characterised men controlled by desire. They delighted in "wine-bibbing and gluttonous feeding, base slaves to strong drink and fish and dainty cakes, sneaking like greedy little dogs round banqueting halls and tables."[75]

Philo also sees a correlation between ἐπιθυμία and οἰνοφλυγία. He describes the lover of pleasure as one who feeds:

> on that which comes up out of the earth with the revolving seasons, and which produces drunkenness (οἰνοφλυγίαι), daintiness, and greediness. These, causing the cravings (ἐπιθυμίας) of the belly to burst out and fanning them into flame, make the man a glutton, while they also stimulate and stir up the stings of his sexual lusts.[76]

In *De Specialibus Legibus* 1.192, Philo describes the festal occasions of Gentiles, a practice which, he says, must not contaminate their Jewish feasts:

> These festal occasions of relaxation and cessation from work have often ere now opened up countless avenues to transgressions. For strong drink and gross eating accompanied by wine-bibbing, while they awaken the insatiable lusts of the belly, inflame also the lusts seated below it, and as they stream along and overflow on every side they create a torrent of evils innumerable, because they have the immunity of the feast for their headquarters and refuge from retribution.[77]

The combination of ἐπιθυμία and οἰνοφλυγία in 4:3 suggests that Peter has in mind

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[73]Polybius, *Hist.* 2.19.4.

[74]Seneca, *Ep.* 83.20.

[75]Philo, *Spec.* 4.19. See also *Mos.* 2.185.

[76]Philo, *Op.* 158. See also Philo, *Spec.* 1.148.

[77]See also Philo, *Cher.* 92.

drunkenness and sexual lust in the context of festal occasions or banquets. This is further reinforced by the use of κῶμος. κῶμος was originally used for the festal procession in honour of Dionysus.[78] Later it alluded to a banquet or a meal. By Plato's time, κῶμος had taken on a negative meaning.[79] It connotes excessive feasting accompanied by carousing and revelry.

The next word is πότος, which in classical Greek means "drink" as distinct from food. It connotes a drinking party, characterised by drunkenness, violence and mischief.[80] In *Jewish Antiquities* 5.289 and *Testament of Judah* 8:2, πότος is also used in the context of a party or a feast or banquet. Xenophon also uses πότος in the setting of a dinner or a drinking party.[81]

c) εἰδωλολατρία

The list of these joint activities culminates in idolatry. This may suggest that the preceding activities took place in the context of pagan worship,[82] although not all forms of pagan worship would involve drunken parties. We have seen earlier that worship of gods was an important part of life.[83] Here this worship is clearly seen by Peter as something which is an abomination in the sight of a holy God, hence his use of the negative term εἰδωλολατρία. Of course, this was not a term used by pagan writers to decribe the worship of gods. ἀθεμίτοις may appear as a redundant adjective here, but Selwyn is probably right to translate the word to mean "abominable, unrighteous."[84] It emphasises the severity of their offence against God, whose law, in Peter's view, they have broken.

Thus by his enumeration of his readers' pre-conversion activities in 4:3, Peter describes a lifestyle which is no longer compatible with their new life as Christians. These activities will have taken place in the course of their social relationships with other pagans. The combination of οἰνοφλυγία, κῶμος and πότος in 4:3 gives a graphic picture of people coming together for their social and religious activities, where they indulge in excessive drinking and feasting,

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[78]*BAGD* 461.

[79]Plato, *Rep.* 573D. See also Josephus, *Ant.* 17.65.

[80]Philo, *Cont.* 46. In this context, Philo is speaking of the assemblies and meals of "other people" in contrast to those who follow the contemplative life.

[81]Xenophon, *An.* 7.3.26; *Symp.* 8.41.

[82]Davids, 151.

[83]See pp. 25-27.

[84]Selwyn, 212.

culminating in drunkenness, orgies and revelry.

As we have seen above, these gatherings might have taken place during the celebration of some public religious festival or at the meetings of voluntary associations. Plutarch speaks of the fondness of men for gathering on "festal days and banquets at the temples, initiations and mystic rites, and prayer and adoration of the gods."[85] This refers to the festivals in honour of local gods and the celebration of the imperial cult, where people assembled to offer sacrifices to the gods and the emperor, and participated in the feasting and games that followed.

Association meetings were also the place for feasting and merrymaking. These meetings were often rowdy, so much so that complaints had been brought against them.[86] The rules of an association of gypsum merchants provided that "regularly on the twenty-fifty of each month, they shall drink six pints of beer each."[87] It is not surprising that the rules and regulations of some associations enjoined members to "take your ease without ill-temper," to maintain "tranquillity and propriety," and to appear on feast days "in your most decent clothes."[88]

Before conversion, Christians will have been very much bound up in their social relationships with non-Christians, participating in social and religious activities, which will have formed a very integral part of their social life. Achtemeier notes rightly that Christians were

> living in a culture in which religious observances, regarded as of great importance, were inextricably woven into the social fabric, covering everything from domestic and agricultural matters to cities to regional assemblies for religious festivals.[89]

Their involvement in social relationships within the household, with members of voluntary associations, and with other members of the community required them to participate in activities which were no longer compatible with their new beliefs. They abandoned these

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[85]Plutarch, *Mor.* 169D.

[86]According to Philo, "sodalities and clubs were constantly holding feasts under pretext of sacrifice in which drunkenness vented itself in political intrigue": *In Flacc.* 4. A similar complaint was made by Cyprian later when he spoke of the "long frequenting of the disgraceful and filthy banquets of the Gentiles in their college": Cyprian, *Ep.*, 67.6.2.

[87]*P.Mich.* V 245 (47 CE). I owe this reference to Simon Gathercole.

[88]MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 78.

[89]Achtemeier, 284.

activities, and in so doing, their social relationships with non-Christians were radically transformed.

5) Effect of Conversion on Social Relationships

Conversion must have radically affected the social relationships of Christians in Asia Minor.[90] On the one hand, it will have changed the way they related to unbelieving members of their household, their friends, neighbours and fellow citizens. On the other hand, conversion initiated them into new social relationships with other Christians. We turn now to examine these two sets of relationships.[91]

a) Relationships between Christians and Non-Christians

Peter's description of how pagans have reacted to the withdrawal of Christians from participating in social and religious activities suggests the severity with which they viewed the matter. They are said to be shocked (4:4; ξενίζονται implies astonishment at something new or strange).[92] Further, the pagans are described as βλασφημοῦντες.

In secular Greek, βλασφημία means "abusive speech", the strongest form of "personal mockery and calumniation."[93] The object can be the living, the dead or a deity. In the NT, the main object of blasphemy is God. When used in relation to men, βλασφημέω is used in the sense of injuring their reputation.[94] This is the same sense used in 4:4. Elsewhere in 1 Peter, non-Christians are said to have expressed their hostility towards Christians in wrongful accusations (2:12), ignorant talk (2:15), insults (3:9) and malicious slander (3:16).

The indignation of pagans at the withdrawal of Christians from their communal social and religious activities and their consequent abuse is probably not exaggerated by Peter. In his speech imploring cities and people not to be hostile to one another, Dio Chrysostom said:

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[90]This thesis is concerned primarily with social relationships between Christians and non-Christians. For the effect of conversion on the economic interests of Christians, see J.N. Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

[91]As this thesis is concerned primarily with relationships between Christians and non-Christians, less attention will be paid to relationships between Christians.

[92]Polybius, *Hist.* 3.14; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.45.

[93]*TDNT* 1.621.

[94]Tit. 3:2; Rom. 3:8; 1 Cor. 4:13.

> Furthermore, consider how much more pleasant it is to visit one's neighbours when they are on terms of intimacy and not of hostility, and how much better it is for those who are entertained away from home to be received without distrust, and how much better and more sensible it is at the common religious gatherings and festivals and spectacles to mingle together, joining with one another in common sacrifice and prayer, rather than the opposite, cursing and abusing one another (καταρωμένους και βλασφημοῦντας).[95]

When friendships ceased in ancient Greco-Roman society, it was common for one to use invective against one's enemies to inflict pain and to provoke laughter among onlookers.[96] The aim was to subject one's enemies to public humiliation and disgrace.

It is likely that Christians will have suffered such abuse when they abstained from joining the members of their household in worshipping household gods, and from participating with their friends and neighbours in communal social and religious gatherings and festivals. In so doing, they were turning their backs on their social relationships with non-Christians, which had formed an integral part of their life.

On the other hand, the above evidence does not suggest that Christians in Asia Minor suffered from a systematic programme of persecution by the Roman government. The one passage in the letter which may suggest some kind of organised state persecution is 4:12-15. This refers to Christians suffering on account of the name of Christ. According to Beare, this description is one clear case of correspondence between 4:12-16 and Pliny's letter to Trajan.[97] However this alone is not sufficient to justify the suggestion that official prosecution is in view in 1 Peter. Believers in Jesus Christ are referred to as "Christians" in Acts 11:26 and 26:28. Neither of these references allude to the presence of official persecution. The name "Christian" was also used in pagan literature prior to Pliny's correspondence with Trajan in 112 CE.[98] A similar position has been defended by Michaels, who writes:

> It would be difficult to argue that being a "Christian" was in itself a crime because Pliny's description of the great success of the Christian movement in Bithynia tells conclusively against any notion that Christianity had been outlawed there.[99]

Even if Christians were brought to court, as 4:15 may suggest, these actions will have been

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[95]Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 40.28. This speech was delivered at Prusa around 101 CE.

[96]Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*, 51.

[97]Beare, 33.

[98]Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44; Suetonius, *Ner.* 16.

[99]Michaels, 268-269.

initiated by members of the community, and not by public officials (2:12; 3:16; 4:4;14). It was the same in Pliny's case, where an anonymous list was published containing the names of Christians.[100] In his reply, the emperor Trajan confirmed that Christians must not be sought out.[101] Thus hostility against Christians came from their non-Christian fellow citizens, friends, neighbours and relatives, and not from the ruling authorities.

Furthermore the words used in 1 Peter to describe the hostility against Christians support this view. In 2:12 καταλαλοῦσιν is used to portray the slander and verbal abuse suffered by Christians. The same word is used again in 3:16, and slanderers are referred to as οἱ ἐπηρεάζοντες. In 2:15 it is said to be God's will that the good works of Christians should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men (φιμοῦν τὴν τῶν ἀφρόνων ἀνθρώπων ἀγνωσίαν). In 4:14 Peter uses ὀνειδίζεσθε ("you are being ridiculed") to describe the suffering of Christians at the hands of non-Christians. All these words point to abuse from non-Christians in the community rather than the activities of organised state persecutors.

The view that suffering in 1 Peter was the direct result of organised state persecution has not found favour with many scholars. From earlier commentators such as Selwyn to more recent writers such as Michaels and Achtemeier, the preferred view is that Christians in Asia Minor suffered abuse from the hands of non-Christians in their community and not from the state.[102] Achtemeier rightly observes that

> such an origin of the persecution of Christians means that it will arise wherever Christians abandon a previous mode of activity for one that denies the validity of the societal practices their contemporaries engage in.[103]

The same situation would occur wherever and whenever Christians withdrew from their social relationships with non-Christians. Non-Christians would retaliate by abusing them. This would apply all over Asia Minor, whether in the sixties, the seventies or the eighties CE, for it would recur whenever Christians opposed the activities and values of non-Christians on account of their faith.[104]

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[100]Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.

[101]Pliny, *Ep.* 10.97.

[102]Selwyn, 55; Michaels, 117, 263; Achtemeier, 276-285. See also Brox, 25-34.

[103]Achtemeier, 276.

[104]Achtemeier sees the same situation in the twentieth century: Achtemeier, 277.

b) Relationships between Christians

Conversion will have also changed the social relationships of Christians in another way. It has incorporated them into a new community with other believers. These include women and slaves. They have new status and a new identity (2:4-10). New relationships have to be built up among them. These relationships are to be characterised by brotherly love for one another (1:22; 3:8; 4:8), expressed through hospitality and the use of their gifts for each other's benefit (4:9-11).

6) Summary

The social portrait of Christians in Asia Minor, as drawn above, shows them as predominantly Gentiles with mixed social and economic status. Whether they were from the urban or rural areas, they were all involved in basic social relationships, in their own households, with members of voluntary associations, and with other fellow citizens in their communities. Conversion had made a radical change in these relationships. On the one hand, Christians had withdrawn themselves from associating with non-Christians, who retaliated by heaping abuse on them. On the other hand, they became members of a new community of believers. It is my contention that this social portrait must form the basis of any reconstruction of the social setting of 1 Peter, and we turn to examine this in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

THE SOCIAL SITUATION OF 1 PETER: A SOCIO-SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVE

Most scholars are agreed that Christians in 1 Peter faced a conflict situation. We have seen in the preceding chapter that evidence from the letter supports the view that their difficulties came from unconverted family members, friends, and neighbours.[1] Conflict had begun when Christians withdrew from participating with non-Christians in social and religious activities, which were no longer acceptable for Christians (1:18; 4:3-4). However most scholars dwell very briefly on this issue, and do not give these passages the attention they deserve.

A few scholars have gone further, exploring the effects of conflict on the addressees to get a clearer picture of their social situation. They have noted that there are two main strands in Peter's response to their situation. On the one hand, he emphasises the internal solidarity of Christian communities. Their common experience of new birth has brought them together to become the people of God, a spiritual house, a royal priesthood, a holy nation (2:9-10). They are exhorted to love one another as brothers (1:22; 3:8; 4:8), and to exercise their gifts for each other's benefit (4:9-11). Different groups are instructed on how to relate to one ~~other~~ another in their congregations (5:1ff).

On the other hand, Peter also stresses their social relationships with non-Christians in their daily lives. They have to relate with non-Christian governing authorities, with non-Christian masters and non-Christian husbands, and with non-Christians friends and neighbours (2:11-3:17; 4:12-19). In these relationships, he encourages Christians to refrain from participating in certain activities with non-Christians (1:14; 2:11; 4:3-4). However they are to remain in these relationships with non-Christians, and to do good to them (2:12, 15, 20; 3:6, 13, 16; 4:19).

These two strands suggest the importance of social relationships in the lives of Christians in Asia Minor, both with non-Christians and with Christians. Any attempt to reconstruct the social setting of 1 Peter must give equal attention to both strands in Peter's response. If one

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[1]This majority view has been consistently defended for the past few decades: see W.C. van Unnik, "Christianity according to 1 Peter," *ExpT* LXVIII (1956) 79-83; Goppelt (1978) 39; W.L. Schutter, *Hermeneutic and Composition in 1 Peter* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1989) 12; Achtemeier, 276-277.

strand is stressed at the expense of the other, an incomplete picture of the social setting will emerge.

In the first part of this chapter, I shall examine in some detail two significant works on the social setting of 1 Peter, those of Elliott and Balch. They have been chosen because of their socio-historical approach and their use of socio-scientific tools.

1) Elliott's *A Home for the Homeless*

a) Correlation between πάροικος and οἶκος (τοῦ θεοῦ)

Elliott's main thesis is that there is a significant correlation between πάροικος and οἶκος (τοῦ θεοῦ), two terms which together with other imagery in 1 Peter point to the addressees' social condition and Peter's socioreligious response. We saw in chapter 1 that Elliott's literal understanding of πάροικοι and παρεπίδημοι as "resident aliens" and "visiting strangers" respectively leads him to conclude that their status as πάροικοι and παρεπίδημοι was not a consequence of their conversion, but a reflection of their social, economic, political and legal estrangement from the rest of society.[2]

b) Applying Wilson's Sectarian Studies: Conversionist Sect

In addition to their deprived status as πάροικοι, Elliott asserts that "it was their religious allegiance, with the exclusiveness that such allegiance required, which had incited the suspicion and hostility of their neighbors."[3] He argues that this conflict with non-Christians can best be examined in the light of sectarian studies. Applying Wilson's definition of a sect, he concludes that "the comparison of the data of 1 Peter with this model leaves no doubt about the sectarian character of its intended recipients."[4] He further examines the different sub-types of sects categorised according to their response to the outside world, and deduces that the situation in 1 Peter conforms to the conversionist response. He quotes at length from Wilson:

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[2]See p. 20.

[3]Elliott, *Home*, 73. Elliott refers to Wilson's definition in B.R. Wilson, *Sects and Society: A Study of the Elim Tabernacle, Christian Science, and Christadelphians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961) 1.

[4]Elliott, *Home*, 75. Elliott quotes from B.R. Wilson, *Magic and the Millenium: A Sociological Study of Religious Movements of Protest from Tribal and Third-World Peoples* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) 38-39.

Conversionist sects appear to arise most readily in circumstances in which a high degree of individuation occurs. Such a condition may occur through the atomization of social groups in a process of profound social upheaval in which more stable social structures are impaired or destroyed, communities are disrupted, and individuals are forcibly detached from their kinsfolk in enforced or induced migration by conquerors or invaders. Thus, many individuals may find need of spiritual and social accommodation in an alien social context. Likeness of circumstances - as with slaves, displaced people, foreigners - may be sufficient to overcome differences of cultural background and ethnicity in the welding of new religiously based communities. Such may have been the condition of the early spread of Christianity.[5]

It is the conversionist characteristic that attracts public hostility and resentment. Elliott argues, quite rightly, that the hostility did not come from Roman persecution, but from ignorance, curiosity and suspicion of wrongdoing by the public. Such reactions conformed to "the social pressure, religious discrimination and local hostility which customarily were directed by natives against inferior aliens and exotic religious sects."[6]

Apart from this polarisation with outsiders, Elliott also detects "polarisation and lack of unity from within the sect."[7] This is based on his assumption that what is proscribed in the letter was possibly current practice while what is prescribed had not yet been fully realized:

> Thus the repeated stress on separation from all pre-Christian associations and types of behaviour (1:14; 18; 2:11; 4:1-4) suggests disagreement among the converts concerning their appropriate relation to outsiders ... On the other hand, the injunction to civic obedience (2:13-17) suggests that there may have been some converts more prone to a course of resistance or perhaps total civic withdrawal. The warnings against "malice, guile, insincerity, envy and slander" (2:1) and preoccupation with superficial externals (3:3-4) likewise hint at a certain lack of consensus regarding common group values. In the same vein behavior detrimental to internal unity could have prompted the positive encouragement of brotherly love, mutual affection and concord (1:22; 3:7, 8-9; 4:8; 5:14), ungrudging hospitality (4:9), respect for internal order and authority (the subordination theme of 2:18-3:7; 5:1-5a) and mutual humility (3:8; 5:5b-7).[8]

Thus according to Elliott, Christians in Asia Minor faced a two-fold crisis. They had to cope with suffering from outsiders, and with the adverse effects of that suffering on their communal life. He concedes that this is not gleaned directly from the text but from his use of the closest sociological analogue, that of a conversionist sect, from which he hopes to "gain a broader

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[5]Elliott, *Home*, 77.

[6]Elliott, *Home*, 80.

[7]Elliott, *Home*, 83.

[8]Elliott, *Home*, 83.

and yet more specifically social picture of the issues involved."[9] Members of a conversionist sect must deal with problems involving

> resistance and hostility from outsiders, threats to internal social cohesion and member self-esteem, and challenges to the plausibility of the means by which both negative experience and positive hope are explained, legitimated and integrated into a total world of meaning.[10]

Elliott sees the addressees of 1 Peter facing similar issues.[11]

c) Applying Coser's Social Conflict Theory

According to Elliott, the social conflict experienced by Christians in Asia Minor had raised questions about their identity, integrity and ideology, and it was these questions that Peter had to address in his letter. He refers to the letter's "socioreligious strategy and ideology" aimed at reinforcing the group consciousness, cohesion and commitment of the Christian sect in Asia Minor.[12]

Elliott starts with the issue of relations between Christians and non-Christians in 1 Peter, where he notes an apparent discrepancy in the way Christians should relate with non-Christians. On the one hand, the relationship is depicted as one of alienation and hostility (2:11-12, 15; 3:16 4:4, 15). On the other hand, the outsiders are portrayed in positive and optimistic terms (2:12; 13-17; 3:1-2). He considers earlier attempts to explain this apparent inconsistency unsatisfactory.

Instead Elliott turns to consider social conflict and its functions in a conversionist sect. He draws on Coser's study of the positive effects of social conflict. Sociologically speaking, conflict has a group-binding effect on the group facing the conflict. It reaffirms the identity of the group and maintains its boundaries against outsiders. External conflict also promotes internal cohesion. Conflict creates the opportunity for members within the group to clarify and redefine their distinctiveness. Moreover "conflict binds antagonists."[13] According to Coser, conflict joins the contending parties in a common struggle and enables each party to acquire

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[9]Elliott, *Home*, 102.

[10]Elliott, *Home*, 102.

[11]Elliott, *Home*, 102-106.

[12]Elliott, *Home*, 107.

[13]Elliott, *Home*, 117. Elliott refers to L. Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (New York: Free Press, 1956).

knowledge from the other. Thus contending groups interact rather than withdraw from one another.

From these positive effects of conflict, Elliott suggests that the strategy of 1 Peter was not to provide ways of eliminating conflict or to encourage withdrawal from society or to encourage cultural assimilation or accommodation. Rather the strategy was "to encourage struggle and resistance as a necessary prerequisite for an effective missionary enterprise."[14] Instead of allowing conflict to have its negative effect on the community, Peter was emphasising conflict to enhance internal cohesion and solidarity. Elliott goes so far as to pose the question: "Is it conceivable that in the interest of enhancing Christian solidarity the author(s) of 1 Peter exaggerated the conflict and that less conflict had actually existed?"[15]

d) A Distinctive Communal Identity

Having established the strategy of the letter, Elliott turns to examine other related features of this strategy. He examines the language used to portray the addressees' distinctive communal identity, focusing on the different metaphors, and the contrast between the Christian and the Gentile way of life. In particular, he studies the meaning of divine election, and its effect on Christian πάροικοι. Election gives Christians a special and unique status. It distinguishes them from outsiders. It also consoles them and reassures them of divine support and ultimate vindication when they encounter suffering. Most significantly, the theme of election draws together two important aspects of the Christian community - their πάροικος status in society, on the one hand, and their status as the distinctive οἶκος of God, on the other.

Elliott argues that the οἶκος theme is central and basic in 1 Peter, and that this is part of Peter's strategy and response to the situation of Christians in Asia Minor. The term οἶκος is important both theologically and sociologically. After examining the significance and function of the οἶκος in the Greco-Roman world, and in the OT and NT, Elliott concludes that the οἶκος constituted the basic social structure upon which more extensive political, social and religious organisations were modelled. Correlatively, it set the standard for defining all those outside the household: the strangers, the aliens, the πάροικοι. To aliens and strangers, the idea of an οἶκος to which they could belong was a powerful ingredient in Peter's response to the

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[14]Elliott, *Home*, 117.

[15]Elliott, *Home*, 115.

situation, for it gave them a sense of social security, identity and sense of belonging:

> In the community of the faithful the stranger is no longer an isolated alien but a brother or sister. For the *paroikoi* of society there is a possibility of life and communion in the *oikos tou theou*, a home for the homeless.[16]

Next we turn to examine Balch's thesis, which focuses mainly on the household code in 1 Peter and applies a different socio-scientific tool. A critical discussion of both will follow.

2) Balch's *Let Wives be Submissive*

a) The Household Code

Balch's analysis of the social setting of 1 Peter is based mainly on his study of the function of the household code in the letter. He makes an extensive literary study of the household code in Graeco-Roman society, and concludes that the classical topoi concerning household management and authority and submission in the household as they appeared in Plato and Aristotle are applicable to the Roman age.[17] The pattern of submission in NT household codes with its pairs and its emphasis on the submission of the subordinate member of each pair was known outside Christianity and Judaism. It was used by Middle Platonists, Peripatetics, Stoics, Epicureans, Hellenistic Jews, and Neopythagoreans.

Balch's main thesis is that these classical topoi became a standard for household conduct in Roman society. Many minority religious groups, including Christians, had to relate to this household ethic. Any attempt to subvert this would attract criticism and hostility from society, as was evident in the case of the cults of Dionysus and Isis. The former attracted women whose nocturnal celebrations by night were so offensive to the Romans that the cult was subsequently forbidden.[18] The latter were accused of reversing the proper roles of men and women, which was construed as a threat to the Roman constitution.[19]

Roman society also criticised Judaism, another minority religious group, for their ways were so radically different from the Romans. Philo and Josephus defended their way of life as being consistent with the Graeco-Roman household ethic. Josephus wrote an apologetic encomium on the Jewish nation, in which he affirmed the submission of Jewish women to their

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[16]Elliott, *Home*, 288.

[17]Balch, *Wives*, 23-62.

[18]Balch, *Wives*, 67-69.

[19]Balch, *Wives*, 69-73.

husbands and the acceptance of the authority of the Roman emperor and governors by the Jewish people.[20]

Balch argues that the conduct of these minority religious communities left Graeco-Roman society suspicious and critical of foreign cults and religions. To the Romans, Christianity was also a foreign religion, and they viewed Christians with distrust and antagonism. Balch contends that the conversion of slaves and wives had threatened the Roman concept of order, peace and harmony in the household, and had resulted in slander of Christians.

In Balch's view, 1 Peter was ~~intedned~~ intended as a response to this situation. Peter affirms and adopts with some modifications the Graeco-Roman household code, using it as an apology to reassure the Roman authorities of the loyalty of Christians to the state and to silence the slander and abuse that these conversions had attracted. Christian wives obviously could not submit to their husbands according to the Graeco-Roman understanding of submission, for that would entail the adoption of their husbands' religion. Nevertheless, Christian wives and slaves are encouraged not to withdraw from their pagan households but to remain in these households and to do good. Thus Balch sees a community assimilating the positive aspects of their society's culture in their defence against suspicion, criticism and slander from society.

b) Applying the Acculturation Theory

Balch uses the sociological theory of acculturation to examine the social situation of 1 Peter.[21] He rejects Elliott's rigid use of Wilson's theories on sects, and what he sees as an overemphasis on Coser's social conflict theory in Elliott's thesis. He argues that the use of acculturation theory can illuminate our understanding of the social dynamics and tensions reflected in 1 Peter. Balch relies on Siegel's work on acculturation and quotes from his work:

> One of the obvious invariant processes of acculturation ... is the transmission of cultural materials (objects, traits, or ideas) between the two systems ... In the most general terms we can make two statements about intercultural transmission: (1) that the patterns and values of the receiving culture seem to function as selective screens in a manner that results in the enthusiastic acceptance of some elements, the firm rejection of other elements; and (2) that the elements which are transmitted undergo transformations in the

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[20]Balch, *Wives*, 75-76.

[21]Balch, "Hellenization/Acculturation," 86-101.

receiving culture systems.[22]

Applying this to 1 Peter, Balch sees a "firm rejection" by Christians of certain patterns of behaviour common in pagan society (1:18; 4:3-4). However, there is also an enthusiastic acceptance of ethical ideas and patterns of conduct which Graeco-Roman society regarded as good. The assumption is that both Christians and pagans could recognise what is good behaviour. One aspect of doing good is the maintenance of peaceful and harmonious social relationships in the households. But the distinctiveness in 1 Peter is that the basis of ethical injunction is Christological (2:13, 19, 21-24).

Graeco-Roman society had its household codes which described very clearly the ethical duties of different persons in the households. According to Balch, Peter adopts this household code but modifies it to encourage Christians to acculturate to Roman society.

3) Response to Elliott and Balch

After the publication of their works in 1981, Elliott and Balch engaged in dialogue on their views of the social setting of 1 Peter, and subsequently published their respective responses in 1986.[23] I shall use these responses as a springboard for an assessment of their positions.

It may appear from the above that Elliott and Balch have reached diametrically opposing views on the social situation of 1 Peter, and the author's response to it. On the one hand, Elliott finds the Christian communities in Asia Minor crumbling under the weight of external pressures and internal strife, causing a breakdown of unity. In response to this, Peter's strategy was to reinforce their distinctive communal identity as the household of God, to promote internal cohesion and to provide it with a basis for continued faith and hope. In sociological terms, Elliott focuses mainly on the maintenance of group boundaries.

Balch, on the other hand, detects Christians under hostility from society, for the conversion of slaves and wives was perceived as subverting the harmony of the household. In response, Peter encourages a defence of their way of life to counter this antagonism. Balch stresses the group's integration with the Roman society and Peter's adoption, with some modifications, of the Graeco-Roman household code to promote acculturation. Sociologically

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[22]Balch quotes from B.J. Siegel, "Acculturation: An Exploratory Formulation," *American Anthropology* 56 (1954) 985.

[23]See J.H. Elliott, "1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy," in Talbert (ed.), *Perspectives on 1 Peter*, 64-78, and Balch, "Acculturation/Hellenization," pp. 79-101 in the same volume.

speaking, Balch emphasises the importance of social linkage with outsiders.

There are two reasons for their divergent views. One is the different range of Petrine material used, and the second is their choice of socio-scientific tools.

a) Range of Petrine Material Used

Elliott rightly argues that the cause of the divergent views of Balch and himself is differences in the extent of the material they each examine. He claims to have considered the entire letter while asserting that Balch has concentrated mainly on the household code and has not integrated this into the total context of the letter.[24]

However an analysis of the scope of material used by Elliott shows that while he may have considered a larger portion of 1 Peter than Balch, he has focused only on one of the two strands in the letter. His primary focus is on the internal life of the Christian community. He makes extensive studies of matters like election and the concept of household. In the two sections relating to the relationship of Christians with non-Christians, his main interest is not on how Christians should relate with non-Christians, but on how internal conflict had damaged the solidarity of Christian communities and how the positive effects of conflict could enhance internal cohesion.[25] Elliott attempts to redress this imbalance in his 1986 article, claiming that while the letter advocates ways of maintaining the distinctive identity and internal cohesion of the Christian communities, it also encourages a way of life in obedience to God's will, which includes the avoidance of evil and the doing of good. This will reduce the conflict with non-Christians, and will ultimately win the latter over.[26]

However, elsewhere in the same article, he views these injunctions as "behavior, norms, and values typical of persons belonging to the household of God".[27] There is no doubt that common values would bind a group together. But Elliott has not shown why Peter should devote such a large part of his letter to encouraging Christians to relate with non-Christians (2:11-4:6). Instead of treating it in its own rights, he has subsumed this important issue of relationships between Christians and non-Christians under the heading of the internal life of

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[24]Elliott, "1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy," 65.

[25]Elliott, *Home*, 107-118.

[26]Elliott, "1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy," 69.

[27]Elliott, "1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy," 66.

Christian communities. In so doing, he has effectively disregarded one of the two strands of the letter. Thus Elliott and Balch are each focusing primarily on different sections of 1 Peter. It is not surprising that they have come to such conflicting conclusions!

b) Use of Different Socio-Scientific Tools

The next issue of contention between Elliott and Balch relates to their choice of socio-scientific tools. As noted above, Balch attributes what he terms Elliott's "misunderstanding" of the social situation of 1 Peter to an over-rigid application of Wilson's early sociological theories and an overemphasis on conflict theory.[28]

i) Wilson's Sectarian Studies

With regard to Elliott's use of Wilson's sectarian studies, Balch accuses Elliott of failing to consider Wilson's subsequent revision of his views. He refers to Wilson's later works, in which the latter clarifies the use of sect types as "essentially tools, and their purpose is not one of classification ... Ideal types are not empty boxes into which the sociologist drops appropriate cases ..."[29] Elliott however has applied the sect types rigidly, an approach which "has kept him from seeing some significant social tendencies reflected in the text of 1 Peter."[30]

There are other qualifications to Wilson's sectarian studies which Balch has not mentioned. Wilson himself significantly revised his earlier model of analysis by 'response to the world'. According to his revised view, sects are regarded as manifesting diverse tendencies which are labelled "world-denying, world-indifferent, and world-enhancing."[31] This revision highlights the different ways in which group members relate to outsiders. Elliott's failure to consider this variation has led him to focus more heavily on the internal life of the Christian community than the text merits.

Elliott has also failed to consider Wilson's reservations on the theory of relative deprivation, which he has adopted in substance. A major feature of Peter's strategy, according

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[28]Balch, "Hellenization/Acculturation," 84. Holmberg commends Elliott's use of sect types without making any critical assessment: *Sociology and the New Testament*, 92-94.

[29]Balch quotes from B. Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford: OUP, 1982) 105 in "Hellenization/ Acculturation," 85.

[30]Balch, "Hellenization/Acculturation," 85.

[31]Wilson, *Religion*, 111.

to Elliott, is the identification and exhortation of the Christian community as the household of God:

> For Christian *paroikoi* demeaned, deprived and dispersed within a strange and alienated society, their identification as the elect and holy household of God was a most effective means for affirming their distinctive communal identity and socioreligious integrity.[32]

While Elliott concedes that οἶκος is not the only imagery used to depict the Christian community in 1 Peter, he argues that it was "the most comprehensive means of the Petrine strategy."[33] He has made the correlation between πάροικος and οἶκος, and argues that the resident aliens in 1 Peter experienced a sense of deprivation and turned to Christianity to meet that need. While Elliott does not refer to the theory of relative deprivation by name, he has adopted the essence of the theory, which has been used by some sociologists to explain the origins and development of sectarian groups.

Wilson, however, has reservations about this theory.[34] One problem is that it tends to make religion into a dependent variable, and it implies that no one would hold such a view of the world were he not suffering deprivation. We have already cast doubt on Elliott's case that the addressees were all socially, economically and legally deprived.[35] Christians in Asia Minor had come from diverse social and economic backgrounds, and some would have been well-to-do.

Another difficulty is that such deprivation can be identified only *ex-post facto*. Those who have joined sects are assumed to have been deprived at some earlier time. One then looks for evidence of deprivation in their background experience. However not all who are deprived join religious movements. More importantly, Elliott's correlation between πάροικος and οἶκος downplays the essential role of the power of the gospel in the conversion process of Christians in Asia Minor.

ii) Coser's Social Conflict Theory

Balch accuses Elliott of an overemphasis on social conflict theory in his thesis. However Balch has not substantiated this charge. I shall attempt to do so here. According to Elliott, the

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[32]Elliott, *Home*, 227.

[33]Elliott, *Home*, 228.

[34]Wilson, *Religion*, 115-117.

[35]See pp. 21-24.

addressees of 1 Peter were experiencing the breakdown of internal solidarity which was the negative effect of conflict with non-Christians. As part of his strategy to enhance internal cohesion, Peter stressed the positive effects of conflict. This assumes that while there were positive and negative aspects of social conflict, the Christian community was experiencing only the latter.

It cannot be denied that the addressees of 1 Peter were in conflict with non-Christians, but whether it produced bickering within the community, as Elliott suggests, remains to be proved. Elliott has assumed that what was proscribed in the letter was possibly current practice while what was prescribed had not yet been fully realised.[36] However he has overlooked the genre of 1 Peter here.[37] The repeated stress on separation from all pre-Christian association and types of behaviour (1:14, 18; 2:11; 4:1-4) forms part of the paraenetic instruction to Christians concerning their relations with non-Christians. They have already separated themselves from participation in non-Christian activities (4:3-4). Peter encourages them to continue to do so. Such reiteration need not imply disagreement among the converts concerning their appropriate relations to outsiders, as Elliott suggests.

Furthermore, the repeated exhortations to Christians to love one another (1:22; 3:8; 4:8) need not be construed as addressing a situation of disunity. Again, this is paraenetic instruction to Christians on how they should relate to each other. Christians in Asia Minor needed instruction on how they should relate both to non-Christians and to other Christians. Peter uses the paraenetic genre to address both issues.

There is little, if any, evidence in the letter to show disunity in the Christian community. According to one possible application of Coser's theory, the Christian community should have been more tightly knit because of the group-binding effects of conflict. However in Elliott's application of Coser's theory, the positive effects of conflict only figure in his analysis of Peter's strategy while the effects of hostile external pressure on the Christians are assumed to have been negative. His suggestion that Peter might have exaggerated the conflict in order to enhance internal cohesion and solidarity is unsubstantiated.

What is clear from the letter is Peter urging his readers to do good to reduce conflict and to win over those hostile to them (2:12, 15; 3:1, 16-17). Such exhortation would surely

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[36]Elliott, *Home*, 83.

[37]See chapter 3 below.

undermine Peter's strategy of using the positive effects of conflict, which presumes a continuous state of conflict (assuming that he was aware of such benefits in the first place!).

Elliott's study of the relations between Christians and non-Christians using the social conflict theory is not aimed at examining the nature of such relationships or the conduct of Christians towards non-Christians. Instead, Elliott is more concerned with how conflict affects the internal cohesion within the Christian community. He has failed to pay due attention to the extent of paraenetic material in the letter which instructs Christians on how to relate with non-Christians, in particular on how to do good.

iii) Acculturation Theory

With regard to Balch's use of acculturation theory, Elliott criticises Balch's narrow definition of assimilation, arguing that assimilation involves not only the change of cultural patterns to those of the host society but also the following:

> ... large-scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of the host society ("identification assimilation"), absence of prejudice ("attitude receptional assimilation"), absence of discrimination ("behaviour receptional assimilation), and the absence of value and power conflict ("civic assimilation").[38]

It is true that Balch has applied only one aspect of acculturation theory, that is the process of transmission of cultural materials between two systems. While this process helps us to see how a receiving culture accepts and/or adapts some values and rejects other values of a dominant culture, it is questionable whether this is applicable to the situation in 1 Peter. Acculturation, according to Siegel, is "culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems."[39] Studies applying acculturation have involved two or more independent cultural groups coming into contact with each other. Balch's examples of the adjustment of Japanese and Mexican immigrants to America are typical.

However in 1 Peter it was not the conjunction of two autonomous cultural groups, but of a group of Christians forming a Christian community within the wider Graeco-Roman society. As Christians they had new values but it must not be overlooked that as Gentiles they had shared common values with pagan society. When Christians refused to participate in certain activities with non-Christians, they were rejecting part of their own cultural values as

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[38]Elliott, "1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy," 71.

[39]Siegel, "Acculturation," 974.

well as those of the "dominant culture." When Peter encourages Christians to do good, he is urging them to do what they know to be good according to their own cultural values. Non-Christians would have no problems in recognising these good deeds because they shared a common culture. Meeks expresses this well when he writes:

> It was not only that the Christians, wherever they lived, were under certain pressures from without to conform to the patterns of the larger society. Those patterns were part of themselves, part of who they were, how they thought and how they felt.[40]

Balch's application of acculturation theory to early Christian groups focuses mainly on Hellenistic Diaspora Jews, who had tried to maintain their tradition in an environment dominated by Gentiles.[41] According to Balch,

> First Peter, written by a hellenistic Jewish Christian author from Rome "to the exiles of the Dispersion" in Asia Minor (1 Pet. 1:1), continues the acculturation process in the hellenistic diaspora.[42]

However as we have seen above, Peter was writing to predominantly Gentile Christians, who had come out of pagan Graeco-Roman culture.

In the application of acculturation, then, the acceptance or rejection of values of the "dominant culture", that is, the degree of acculturation assumes a correlation between this and the strength of the group's identity. According to Siegel, conjunctive relations between two groups must fall under two headings, if neither withdrawal nor the complete annihilation of a group occurs.[43] One is progressive adjustment where cultural fusion takes place and a genuine third sociocultural system is developed. The second is stabilised pluralism, where two cultures fail to lose their autonomy. In such cases an intercultural system reaches a point of institutionalised adjustment to serve the interests of both groups. Whether a group develops one way or another depends on the strength of the group's internal cohesion. Balch's application of acculturation to 1 Peter, however, ignores this aspect. He does not show how the material relating to the internal life of Christian communities is relevant to the process of acculturation, if the process is applicable at all.

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[40]W.A. Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986) 13.

[41]Balch, "Hellenization/Acculturation," 89-93.

[42]Balch, "Hellenization/Acculturation," 90.

[43]Siegel, "Acculturation," 987-990.

c) An Incomplete Picture

Thus working with different portions of Petrine material and with different socio-scientific theories, Elliott and Balch arrive at two different conclusions regarding the social setting of 1 Peter and Peter's response. Elliott sees crumbling communities under pressure from external hostile pressures, and focuses mainly on the maintenance in internal cohesion of the communities as Peter's strategy to remedy the situation. Balch, on the other hand, sees Christians coming under criticism from society, and concentrates on the need for a defence and a strategy of acculturation to disarm the critics.

However we have seen above that Elliott's case for the breakdown of internal unity within Christian groups cannot stand for lack of evidence. He is right to stress Peter's concern for the maintenance of internal harmony, but for the wrong reason. He has largely overlooked the different relationships between Christians and non-Christians which Peter addresses in 2:13-3:12. By dealing only with the internal situation of the Christian communities, he has painted only half the picture. Accordingly his view of Peter's response can only represent half the solution.

On the other hand, Balch's assertion that the Romans were suspicious of new Eastern religions, and thus found Christians suspect is not disputed. When slaves and wives were converted, the Romans perceived that their traditional household values were subverted. But this is only one facet of the whole picture. There were other more immediate tensions within the household which were affected when slaves and wives became Christians.[44] Also Balch concentrates mainly on relationships within the household, in particular the husband-wife relationship in 3:1-6. Besides wives and slaves, others had become Christians. 2:13-17 and 3:8-12 are directed at all Christians. How had their conversion threatened society? Balch does not deal with this. But a more serious defect in Balch's thesis is the narrow basis upon which he builds the social situation of 1 Peter and Peter's response. By ignoring the other part of the letter dealing with relationships within the Christian communities, Balch has presented only half the picture.

Thus it is not so much that Elliott's and Balch's theses have pointed in opposite directions but rather that they have each given an incomplete picture of the social setting of 1 Peter because they have both focused on a different part of the letter.

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[44]See chapters 6 and 7.

d) Search for "An Integrating Model"

What is needed, according to Elliott, is "an integrating model" to consolidate the two concepts of boundary maintenance, which emphasises internal cohesion within the Christian community, and social linkage, which stresses relationships between Christians and non-Christians.[45] Various attempts have been made to come up with an integrating model in order to portray a more complete picture of the social setting.

Wire has attempted to do this by using a sociological perspective.[46] She appeals to Mary Douglas' two-dimensional model, with the horizontal plane representing the variable identified by the strength of a group's boundaries which sets it apart from the world, and the vertical plane representing a location or classification, which measures how precisely the distinctions within the life and language of the group are made, and how defined the people's duties, roles and perceptions are. When a group moves up on the vertical plane towards increasingly defined roles, it also moves into patterns that facilitate its integration into a larger, highly classified society. Applying this model to Elliott and Balch, she writes:

> On this model we can concede to Elliott that the author of 1 Peter is indeed moving horizontally to thicken the boundaries around his hearers, seeking to set them apart on Christ's way as their exclusive home. But Balch's thesis does not point in the opposite direction toward a dissolution of group boundaries and a diffusion of individuals into an open environment. Balch can incorporate much of what Elliott says (and vice versa) because he sees the author moving the community "up grid" toward greater integration into a highly classified society where some are subordinate to others in long-traditional ways. The boundary remains strong because the community continues to claim an exclusive election.[47]

Wire's use of Douglas' two-dimensional model underscores the correlation between the strength of a group's boundaries and the degree of integration with society. It highlights the basic problem in Elliott's and Balch's analyses in that they both failed to give equal weight to these two strands. However Wire's proposal cannot be a satisfactory model, as it does not consider the significant role of conflict in the situation.

Another scholar who seeks to use an integrating model to portray a complete picture of

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[45]Elliott, "1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy," 75.

[46]A. Wire, "Review of Elliott's *A Home for the Homeless and Balch's Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter*," *RSR* 10 (1984) 209-216.

[47]Wire, "Review," 216.

the social setting is Talbert.[48] He too has identified the two strands in the letter, *viz*., life within the Christian communities and social interaction with those outside the communities. He also notes the paraenetic genre of the letter. Applying Perdue's classification of occasions for paraenesis, he identifies the occasion in 1 Peter as a call to the addressees to "serious reflection on their initial entrance into their present group or position."[49] This would lead to the establishment of group identity and cohesion.

In Talbert's view, the aim of the letter was the survival of the Christian groups in a persecution context. Peter accomplished this aim by reinforcing the social cohesion of the groups, and by encouraging social adaptability of Christians so as to obtain a favourable response from non-Christians. He refers to the study of George Homans, whose thesis is that human groups desire to survive and to this end the behaviour of group members is determined by "an external system" and "an internal system." The former refers to group behaviour that allows the group to survive in its environment, i.e., social adaptability, while the latter points to group behaviour that arises out of and contributes to internal cohesion.

Talbert's application of Homans' model assumes that the paraenesis in 1 Peter was what was deemed necessary for their survival as a group in a hostile environment. He sees the encouragement for social cohesion in their common Christian experience of new birth. Suffering together at the hands of outsiders had also reinforced this cohesion. It also required them to be socially adaptable in order to survive in an antagonistic situation. The stress on conduct which society recognised as good was aimed at reducing the conflict and winning non-Christians over.

Talbert's analysis has much to commend it. He has identified the genre and its implication for social setting, and has emphasised the persecution context. His use of Homans' model to analyse Peter's instructions gives equal weight to the twin concerns in the letter relating to relationships within the Christian community and relationships between Christians and non-Christians.

However Talbert's view that the social situation of 1 Peter was one of Christian communities struggling for survival in a persecution context needs to be further defined. What dangers were facing these Christians that prompted Peter to issue his two-pronged exhortation

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[48]C.H. Talbert, "The Plan of 1 Peter," in Talbert (ed.), *Perspectives on 1 Peter*, 141-151.

[49]Talbert, "The Plan of 1 Peter," 145.

to maintain internal cohesion within the community, and to interact with non-Christians? Is there an "integrating model" that can examine the correlation between boundary maintenance and social linkage so as to give us a more complete picture of the social setting of 1 Peter? I shall address these questions in the next section.

4) An "Integrating Model" for the Social Setting of 1 Peter

Before we look into an "integrating model" for the social setting of 1 Peter, let us recall the situation which we have sketched so far. In the preceding chapter, we saw that the addressees were predominantly Gentiles from diverse social and economic backgrounds. They lived in cities and villages, and were involved in the basic social relationship structures of Graeco-Roman society. Their relationships within the household, with members of voluntary associations and with neighbours and friends were all affected radically upon their conversion.

On the one hand, conversion made them members of a new community of believers, which included slaves and women. They came from diverse social and economic status, and from different age groups. This was a totally new experience for them, and they needed instructions on how they should relate with one another.

On the other hand, Christians found themselves alienated from non-Christians when they withdrew from participating in social and religious activities with non-Christians, provoking a hostile response. Such abuse might cause Christians to withdraw even further from non-Christians. Consequently they would huddle together more closely in their Christian community, strengthening their boundaries against the outsiders. This was also a new situation for Christians, and they required guidelines on whether they should have any kind of relations with non-Christians.

Hence, the situation in 1 Peter was not the disintegration of internal unity, as Elliott asserts, nor the need for an apology to the Graeco-Roman society, as Balch suggests. The situation was one where the Christian community was tightening its boundaries against outsiders, and there was a growing sense of isolation from society, which needed to be counteracted. Christians in Asia Minor needed instruction on how to relate to other Christians and to non-Christians, and to maintain the right balance in these two sets of relationships. Peter was addressing such a situation.

In his letter, Peter deals with both concerns. The two main strands in his letter are

concerned with their conduct in relationships between Christians (1:22-2:10; 3:8; 4:7-11; 5:1-11), and in relationships between Christians and non-Christians (1:13-21; 2:11-3:6; 3:9-17; 4:3-6, 12-19). Regarding the former, he affirms their distinct corporate identity using OT metaphors originally used to describe Israel: they are a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, a people belonging to God. As members of this new community, they must love one another (1:22; 3:8; 4:8), and use their gifts to serve each other (4:9-11). The elders must oversee those under their care. The younger ones must be submissive to those who are older, and all must be clothed with humility.

Regarding relations between Christians and non-Christians, Peter encourages them to withdraw only from participation in social and religious activities which are no longer compatible with their new faith. But they are not to withdraw totally from their social relationships with unbelievers. Slaves must not run away; wives should neither divorce their husbands nor cease from marital relations with them. Instead Christians are encouraged to remain in their relationships with non-Christians, and to do good to them (2:12,15,20; 3:6,9,13,16-17; 4:19).

The above situation can be analysed from a sociological perspective using two socio-scientific theories. They are the social network theory and the social conflict theory. The former is a more appropriate tool than the conversionist sect theory to study the correlation between boundary maintenance and social linkage, as it shows the dynamics of social relationships of people who form a cluster out of the wider group. The social conflict theory helps us to understand the dynamics of groups in conflict with each other.

L. Michael White first proposed the application of social network theory to early Christian movements.[50] White is critical of the use of sect types to describe early Christian communities, and argues that some of the traditional models of sect formation are not as directly applicable to the historical situation of first-century Judaism and Christianity as has often been claimed.[51] One example is Wilson's sect types, which mostly arise out of pluralistic tendencies within the cultural framework of contemporary Christianity. White suggests a more basic definition of sect as a "deviant or separatist movement within a cohesive and religiously defined dominant

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[50]L.M. White, "Shifting Sectarian Boundaries in Early Christianity," *BJRL* 70 (1988) 7-24.

[51]For some reservations about the use of the sect model, see S.C. Barton, "Early Christianity and the Sociology of the Sect," in F. Watson (ed.), *The Open Text: New Directions for Biblical Studies?* (London: SCM Press, 1993) 140-162.

culture."[52] He writes:

> Thus, despite expressed hostilities and exclusivism, the sect shares the basic constellation of beliefs or 'worldview' of the dominant cultural idiom. One then begins to identify sectarian boundaries on the basis of the particularities of reaction to the 'world' within this shared spectrum.[53]

However, despite formulating a more basic definition of sect, White has chosen a different socio-scientific model for analysing early Christian movements. This is the social network theory, which he applies to the way group identity might be affected by the relationships of those within the group and of group members to those outside and to the patronage systems in the Roman social order.[54] I shall use the social network theory to examine the correlation between boundary maintenance and social linkage in 1 Peter.

a) Social Network Theory

The use of network analysis has only very recently become an accepted part of the social sciences.[55] It is used to study social relations in which every individual is involved. These social relations can be viewed as a network.

Social network theory is based on the premise that the human being is an "interacting social being capable of manipulating others as well as being manipulated by them."[56] Individuals in society are mutually dependent on one another.

Another premise of the theory is that society is a process and not a static system. Social network theory is a tool for analysing social relationships of individuals in groups which are parts of larger groups in society. It focuses on the internal process and dynamics in social relations between interdependent human beings. An individual in society is linked to other persons in different ways, and may be involved in different groups. Thus, the social network

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[52]White, "Shifting Sectarian Boundaries," 14.

[53]White, "Shifting Sectarian Boundaries," 14. White cites Meeks' modification of Wilson's definition of sect in Meeks, *Moral World*, 98-99.

[54]L.M. White, "Social Networks: Theoretical Orientation and Historical Applications," *Semeia* 56 (1992) 23-36. For the application of social network theory to patron-client relationship, see J.K. Chow, *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth* (Sheffield:JSOT Press, 1992).

[55]B. Wellman, "Network Analysis: Some Basic Principles," in R. Collins (ed.), *Sociological Theory* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass Inc., 1983) 155-162.

[56]J. Boissevain, "Preface," in Boissevain & J.C. Mitchell (eds.), *Network Analysis: Studies in Human Interaction* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1973) viii.

is the actual set of links of all kinds among a set of individuals. This includes links of kinship, friendship and neighbourliness.[57]

How an individual sees himself and how he functions in society is constrained by the networks in which and through which he operates. Social network theory helps us to examine the dynamics of these relationships. How the parties relate to one another and how they regard each other in each specific network is determined by the nature of the interaction with one another in that context. As Boissevain describes it: "A person's network forms a social environment from and through which pressure is exerted in either direction to influence behaviour."[58]

One benefit of social network analysis is its ability to analyse quantitatively the weight and influence among different relationships in a person's social environment. Two sets of factors are involved in this analysis. One is the interactional dynamics of the network. In any given social network, there are four main interactional dynamics. First, there is the multiplexity of role relations of individuals within the network. An individual can have different types of links with another individual in the network. For example, X and Y are related by marriage; they are business partners; they have been college friends. Secondly, there is the kind of social interaction between the individuals. This is called the transactional content and gives the means of relative weighting among relationships. Thirdly, there is the direction of the interaction or exchanges among the individuals in the network, for example, whether there is reciprocity. The fourth interactional dynamic is the frequency or duration of the interactions. Both the direction and the frequency or duration of interactions can be used to measure the importance, symmetry, and equity or inequity in the relationship.

The second factor involved in the analysis of social networks is its morphological structure. This analyses the structures of connectedness among the individuals in the network. To do this, one takes into account the size, density and clustering of actors within segments of a network. The size of a person's network of relationships may vary. Large groups tend to break down into smaller groups. Density measures the extent to which members of one's

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[57]J.C. Mitchell, "Networks, Norms and Institutions," in Boissevain & Mitchell (eds.), *Network Analysis*, 22.

[58]J. Boissevain, *Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974) 27.

network are in contact with one another.[59] It indicates the potential communication within the network, and not the actual intercourse, but it influences both the form and content of transactions that actually occur.[60]

The degree of connectedness is the average number of links each person has with others in the same network. There is also the tendency for clusters to develop within larger networks. Clusters are smaller networks which have a relatively higher internal density than the density of the surrounding networks. In other words, the extent of social communication and interaction within the cluster is higher than in the larger network. An individual will tend to behave in a way that conforms to the norms and expectations of the group as long as he is with members of that cluster. Thus higher overall density of the cluster is more likely to foster greater consistency of behavioural norms within that cluster.

White sees the advantages of using social network theory to analyse and quantify social linkages, as it can evaluate the particular types of structures and influences in a given social environment. It does not presuppose any one social or cultural symbol system, for the nature and the normative value of different types of relationships come from the specific social context being examined.

But White also advises caution. He recognises the dangers involved in the use of theoretical models based on data and analysis on one society on another society in another cultural context. Such models must also not be used to fill in gaps in history. White concludes that "historical studies must then be seen as test cases for, rather than necessary conclusions from, such social science models."[61]

With these caveats in mind, White gives an example of the use of network analysis in the changes in societal norms and the impact at the level of cultural change, particularly as applied to the later Roman world. He refers to one of the key postulations of the network theory which holds that a high density within a cluster will tend to reinforce consistency of behaviour among its members.[62] Changes in density would therefore create tensions over the

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[59]For mathematical calculations of density and degree, see R. Niemeuer, "Some Applications of the Notion of Density to Network Analysis," in *Network Analysis*, 45-64.

[60]Boissevain, *Friends*, 37-38.

[61]White, "Social Networks," 31.

[62]White, "Social Networks," 31.

maintenance of behaviourial norms. Thus if a cluster should find itself progressively marginalized from the rest of society, the result is a higher internal density while interlinkages with other segments of the overall network system are reduced. This will cause the cluster to experience alienation and a concomitant sense of reorientation toward internally defined norms. In White's view, such dynamics are often seen in the formation of sects, which by definition are clusters with high internal density.

The reverse also holds true. When individuals in a cluster increase their social linkages with outsiders, there will be tension over discordant norms and expectations which arise as a result of different sets of behaviour in the cluster and in the larger network system. Adjustment and explanation of behaviour must take place so that it is reconcilable both to members of the cluster and the wider group.[63]

White observes a correlation between internal density and external interlinkages, and suggests that this may serve as an indication of the degree of alienation from society or cultural assimilation:

> As in the example above of sect formation, high internal density with low external interlinkages will tend to produce separation. High density with high interlinkages will tend to produce acculturation, where the cluster still retains its group identity. High interlinkages with low or declining density will tend to produce assimilation, so that group identity may itself diminish.[64]

b) Application of Social Network Theory to 1 Peter

The correlation between internal density and external linkages can be applied to the social situation of 1 Peter. Before their conversion, Christians were in various social networks in which certain behavioural norms were expected of them. They were members of households, members of voluntary associations, members of rural or urban communities.[65] They were expected to worship their household gods, and be involved in social and religious activities with other members of the city or village in which they dwelt, in particular in the practice of the imperial cult.

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[63]Boissevain, *Friends*, 43-44.

[64]White, "Social Networks," 32.

[65]On the use of social network theory on voluntary associations, see H. Remus, "Voluntary Associations and Networks: Aelius Aristides at the Asclepieion in Pergamum," in Kloppenborg & Wilson (eds.), *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, 146-175.

Conversion brought a radical change to these social networks. On the one hand, they became members of a cluster, where internal density was high and certain behavioural norms were expected of them. On the other hand, external linkages with non-Christians in the larger society were reduced because they had ceased from their social and religious activities with non-Christians. This combination of high internal density with low external interlinkages would tend towards separation between the cluster and the larger group.

Non-Christians retaliated against the withdrawal of Christians with abuse. The introduction of the conflict element into this situation tends to reinforce the alienation of the cluster from the wider social network. The application of Coser's social conflict theory is appropriate in such cases. According to Coser, conflict enhances the internal cohesiveness of the group.[66] Conflict also establishes and maintains the identity and boundary lines of the group against the outside world.

Thus external hostile pressure strengthened the segregation of the cluster of Christians from the larger social network of non-Christians. Within the cluster, the high density reinforced consistency of behaviour among the members. This argues against Elliott's view that conflict had caused bickering among its members, thereby threatening the internal cohesion of the Christian community.[67] Interlinkages with outsiders tended to decrease with conflict, thereby tending to a further degree of separation.

Thus social network theory provides the "integrating model," which eludes Elliott, by consolidating the two concepts of boundary maintenance and social linkage.[68] When used with Coser's social conflict theory, it gives us insights which are pertinent to our study of the dynamics of social relationships in the context of conflict. Furthermore it addresses Peter's two concerns in his letter regarding relationships between Christians within the Christian community, and between Christians and non-Christians, and thus gives a more complete picture of the social setting than either Elliott or Balch has done.

The dynamics of social relationships of individual Christians within their own community and with non-Christians in the wider Graeco-Roman society are crucial to the reconstruction of the social setting of 1 Peter. Neither Elliott nor Balch have paid sufficient attention to the

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[66]Coser, *Functions of Social Conflict*. See also pp. 49-50.

[67]See pp. 41-42 above.

[68]Elliott, "1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy," 75.

dynamics of social relationships of individuals in 1 Peter. Elliott's use of sectarian studies shows his interest in the dynamics between groups rather than individuals. Balch is more concerned with the wider environment of Graeco-Roman hostility towards new religions, and limits his discussion of social relationships to that which existed between husbands and wives.

5) Summary

Upon conversion, Christians became members of a new community of believers. At the same time, they found themselves alienated from non-Christians. Consequently they were bound together more closely in their Christian community, strengthening their boundaries against the outsiders. If this tendency were left unchecked, Christians would continue to withdraw even further from relations with non-Christians. It was into this social situation that Peter addressed his letter.

In his letter, Peter has to address both sets of relationships. He encourages them to remain in their social relationships with non-Christians, although they are to abstain from those activities which are incompatible with their faith. In increasing interlinkages with outsiders while maintaining high internal density, members of the Christian cluster would experience tension over discordant norms and expectations in their cluster and in the wider social network. They would have to reconcile their behaviour to both groups.

Peter's instructions pertaining to the way Christians should relate with other Christians and with non-Christians can be viewed as a means of reconciling such tensions over the consistency of behaviour towards the two groups. Christians are instructed to refrain from doing evil and to do good to non-Christians. Doing good was consistent with his exhortation to Christians to love one another. It was also consistent with the high standards upheld in Graeco-Roman society for social relationships.

In the next chapter, we shall examine the literary form of Peter's instructions, and its implications for the social setting of 1 Peter.

CHAPTER 3

THE LITERARY GENRE OF 1 PETER AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR ITS SOCIAL SETTING

The first step in interpreting any writing, whether ancient or modern, is to determine its genre.[1] Genre governs both the construction and interpretation of a writing. An author writes according to a set of expectations and conventions, and the reader interprets the work using the same conventions.[2]

This chapter examines the literary genre of 1 Peter. I shall argue that Peter adopted the ancient paraenetic style of letter to exhort his readers. I shall also examine the implications of paraenesis for the social setting of 1 Peter and its social function in the letter.

1) Genre of 1 Peter

a) 1 Peter: A Letter

Peter used a literary form of communication common in the ancient world. He wrote a letter, in this case, a circular letter, for he intended it for the churches in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

Previous theories interpreting 1 Peter as a baptismal liturgy or a baptismal homily did not take the epistolary form of the document seriously. Selwyn, whose work on 1 Peter has long been considered a classic, insists that it contains within it a catechetical document adapted to the epistolary form.[3] This view forms the basis of his detailed exegesis. Recent works on 1 Peter have taken the epistolary form of the document more seriously, and have concluded that it is after all, a letter, and not some other kind of writing.[4]

But what kind of letter is 1 Peter? While it is agreed that 1 Peter is a circular letter, some

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[1]G.N. Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus* (Oxford: OUP, 1989) 14.

[2]R.A. Burridge, *Four Gospels, One Jesus?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 5.

[3]Selwyn, 17-19, 363-466.

[4]Best, 20-28; Grudem, 40-43; Michaels, xlvi-xlix; Marshall, 19-21; Martin, *Metaphor and Composition*, 19-21.

scholars have tried to be more specific and have designated it a diaspora letter.[5] They see similarities between 1 Peter and the letter from the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:23-29 and the Epistle of James, in that they were addressed to believers who were scattered in various places in the Roman Empire.

Michaels goes one step further and argues that 1 Peter is also "apocalyptic" in character.[6] He compares 1 Peter with *2 Baruch*, and concludes that "both documents exhibit a contrast between present suffering and a distinctly apocalyptic future vindication in the framework of reflection on the Jewish experience of exile and dispersion."[7] However the combination of present suffering and future vindication does not necessarily give a letter an apocalyptic character.[8] Other basic elements of the apocalyptic genre, like a revelation given by God, communicated through an "otherworldly mediator", and disclosing future events, are not present in 1 Peter.[9] While 1 Peter speaks of future judgement, it is not a predominant theme in the letter.[10] A cursory reading of 1 Peter will show that much of the letter deals with moral and ethical instructions to Christians. About half of the letter deals with social relationships with non-Christians, and the appropriate response to conflict with unbelievers. The rest of the letter focuses on relationships between Christians.

As Peter is writing to a predominantly Gentile audience, it would be reasonable to assume that he has adopted the style of Graeco-Roman letters.

b) Characteristics of Graeco-Roman Letters

Research on New Testament letters in the light of Graeco-Roman letters has centred mainly on Paul's letters, and has focused on showing how Paul has modified and adapted the letter for his own purposes. The fruits of this research can also be applied to other New Testament

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[5]E.g., Michaels, xlvi-xlviii; Goppelt, 23-24. Thurén accepts the classification of a diaspora letter with some reservations: L. Thurén, *The Rhetorical Strategy of 1 Peter: with special regard to Ambiguous Expressions* (Åbo: Åbo Academy Press, 1990) 81-83.

[6]Michaels, xlviii-xlvix.

[7]Michaels, xlviii.

[8]C.f. Paul's description of present suffering in 2 Cor. 4:8-10 and future judgement in 5:10.

[9]P.D. Hanson, "Apocalypses and Apocalypticism: The Genre," *ABD* 1.279.

[10]1:17; 4:4,17.

letters.[11]

Graeco-Roman letters had an opening formula. The prescript in 1 Peter 1:1-2 corresponds to the basic opening formula in the Greek letter: A- to B- χαίρειν. Like Paul, Peter adapts this form, and Christianises and expands it to describe his own status and that of his readers.

After the prescript comes the "thanksgiving or healthgiving clause." Often the greeting was followed by a prayer for the addressee, or a wish for his or her health, and occasionally by a statement of thanksgiving to a god or gods.[12] 1:3-12 gives praise to God for the salvation he has given through Jesus Christ.

The letter-body comprises three parts: the body-opening, the body-closing and the body-middle.[13] 1:13 satisfies the requirements of a body-opening, in that it begins with the imperatival convention of request and the use of διὸ. The body-closing of the letter can be found in 5:12, which contains the disclosure formula stating the author's intention for writing: ἔγραψα παρακαλῶν καὶ ἐπιμαρτυρῶν ταύτην εἶναι ἀληθῆ χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ. The last three words in 5:12 - εἰς ἣν στῆτε - reiterate the basic request in 1:13. 1 Peter ends with a closing greeting: "Greet one another with a kiss of love."[14] The benediction - "Peace to all of you who are in Christ" - is omitted in P72,[15] but it does not in any way change the character of 1 Peter as a letter which conforms to the form of Graeco-Roman letters.

There were many kinds of letters in the Graeco-Roman world. A comparison of 1 Peter with the paraenetic style will show many similarities, as we shall see in the next section.

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[11]For letters in the Graeco-Roman world, see S.K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in the Greco-Roman World* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986); W.G. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973); D. Aune, *The New Testament in its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987) 158-174.

[12]Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 20.

[13]J.L. White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter: A Study of the Letter-Body in the Non-Literary Papyri and in Paul the Apostle* (Missoula: University of Montana, 1972) 1-11.

[14]Paul often concludes his letters with a similar ending (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26).

[15]The benediction is omitted in P72 alone. While it is generally recognised that P72 contains some errors, the omission of six words at the end of the letter is either a gross oversight, or is due to the fact that the exemplar did not have this concluding sentence. Quinn suggests that the phrase, which originated as a form of benediction in the liturgical assembly, was attached to the public reading of the letter, which in its original edition ended at 5:14a. The scribe of P72 had copied from an exemplar which had the original "short ending": J.D. Quinn, "Notes on Text on P72," *CBQ* 27 (1965) 241-249.

c) Characteristics of Paraenetic Letters

In the ancient world, handbooks were written to instruct students on epistolary styles. One handbook written under the pseudonym of Demetrius listed twenty one types of letters, with samples of each type given. He classifies his letters according to style, which must fit the different circumstances of the author and his reader/s, and the particular occasion for writing.[16] The date of this handbook is still in dispute, with some putting it as early as 200 BCE and others putting it as late as 300 CE; scholars who opt for the latter end of this spectrum accept that sources on which the handbook is based date back to the first century CE.[17]

Another handbook, ascribed to Libanius (probably between 4th to 6th centuries CE), lists forty-one styles of letters. This handbook opens with a definition of the letter (1-3), lists the forty-one types of letters (4) with accompanying definitions (5-45), provides instruction on styles (46-51) and concludes with a brief specimen of each type of letter (52-93). Again, the letters are classified according to style, which must be appropriate to the particular situation of the author and his reader/s, and the occasion for writing.

Although Libanius' handbook has been dated relatively late, its sources also date back much earlier.[18] It is ~~highly likely~~ possible that Peter would have known about the different epistolary styles. He ~~would~~ could have learnt the epistolary form, which was taught on the basis of model letters, in the secondary stage of his eduction.[19] Handbooks were extensively used in schools.

We turn now to examine the characteristics of the paraenetic letter.

i) Persuasion and Dissuasion

The paraenetic style is one in which "we exhort someone by urging him to pursue something or to avoid something. Paraenesis is divided into two parts, encouragement and dissuasion."[20] An example of a paraenetic letter reads: "Always be an emulator, dear friend, of virtuous men. For it is better to be well spoken of when imitating good men than to be reproached by all men

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[16]Pseudo Demetrius, *Epistolary Types*. Text and Translation in Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists*, 31-41; Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 53.

[17]A.J. Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988) 2.

[18]Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists*, 5.

[19]Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists*, 6.

[20]Libanius, *Epistolary Styles* 5.

while following evil men."[21]

There are many examples of paraenetic letters in the Graeco-Roman world. Isocrates (436--538 BCE) wrote to Demonicus, whose father Hipponicus had recently died:

> Therefore, I have not invented a hortatory exercise (παράκλησιν), but have written a moral treatise (παραίνεσιν); and I am going to counsel you on the objects to which young men should aspire and from what actions they should abstain, and with what sort of men they should associate and how they should regulate their own lives.[22]

Isocrates proceeds to instruct Demonicus on how to show devotion to the gods, how to honour his parents, how to respect his friends, and obey the laws (1.13,16). He also dissuades him from drinking parties (1.32).[23]

Another instance of an ancient paraenetic letter is Pliny's letter to Maximus on his recent assumption of the post of imperial legate in Achaia.[24] Pliny advised Maximus to respect their gods, their ancient traditions and their heroic deeds, and not to deprive anyone of their dignity and independence.

ii) Use of Rhetorical Devices

Graeco-Roman writers and philosophers used various rhetorical techniques to persuade their readers or audience to do something or to refrain from doing something. Aristotle defined rhetoric as "the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever."[25] He categorised all forms of rhetorical persuasion under three basic headings, *viz*., ἦθος, πάθος and λόγος:

> Now the proofs furnished by the speech are of three kinds. The first depends upon the moral character of the speaker [ἦθος], the second upon putting the hearer into a certain frame of mind [πάθος], the third upon the speech itself, in so far as it proves or seems to prove [λόγος].[26]

Thus, rhetoric was not just confined to style, choice and arrangement of words, but it also included the treatment of the subject matter, the use of evidence, argumentation, and the

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[21]Libanius, *Epistolary Styles* 52.

[22]Isocrates, *Dem.* 1.5.

[23]See also Isocrates, *Nic*.2.15-25.

[24]Pliny, *Ep.* 8.24,

[25]Aristotle, *Rh.* 1.2.1.

[26]Aristotle, *Rh.* 1.2.

control of emotion.[27]

These general points are all specifically applicable to paraenetic instruction. The appeal to ἦθος is found in the personal and often close relationship between the writer and his reader or the speaker and his audience. Isocrates' *Address to Demonicus* opens with expressions of friendship.[28] Expressions of a close relationship or friendship also served to put the audience in a receptive frame of mind for the moral exhortation.

The main rhetorical mode in paraenesis is λόγος or proof provided by the words themselves. Such proof is often conveyed by means of antithesis. This corresponds to the nature of paraenetic instruction, in which the addressee is advised to pursue or abstain from something. Antithesis could be employed in various forms, for example, vice and virtue lists, the two-ways tradition,[29] contrasting positive and negative sections.

Another rhetorical device in paraenetic instruction is the use of examples (παραδείγματα) to provide a more solid basis for moral and ethical exhortations. Both elements of παραδείγματα and antithesis can be seen in Seneca's advice on the choice of helpers:

> Let us choose, however, from among the living, not men who pour forth their words with the greatest glibness, turning out commonplaces, and holding, as it were, their own little private exhibitions - not these, I say, but men who teach us by their lives, men who tell us what we ought to do and then prove it by practice, who show us what we should avoid, and then are never caught doing that which they have ordered us to avoid.[30]

Another common device used in paraenesis is the code of household ethics, by which members of the household were instructed on their respective duties to one another. Household codes usually list mutual obligations on three pairs of family relationships, namely, husband-wife, master-slave, and parent-child.

d) 1 Peter: A Paraenetic Letter?

Does 1 Peter fall within the paraenetic style?[31]

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[27]G.A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984) 3.

[28]Isocrates, *Dem.* 1.1-3. See also Cicero, *Off.* I.58, where Cicero refers to friendship as the best situation for paraenesis.

[29]Aune, *Literary Environment*, 194-197.

[30]Seneca, *Ep.* 52.8.

[31]Thurén accepts that 1 Peter is paraenesis without examining the characteristics of Graeco-Roman paraenetic style. He uses "paraenesis" to refer to a "universal genre consisting of exhortation and

i) Persuasion and Dissuasion

Peter's instructions to Christians in Asia Minor conforms to the ancient paraenetic style. He urges his readers to follow one way of life and he dissuades them from pursuing another. The way of life he advocates involves both their relationships with Christians and their relationships with non-Christians.

With regard to their social relationships with non-Christians, they are πάροικοι and παρεπίδημοι (1:1,17; 2:11), terms which, as noted, must be understood in their metaphorical meaning.[32] Peter encourages them to live as πάροικοι in reverent fear (1:17), urging them to be self-controlled, and to set their hope fully on Christ (1:13). They must be holy, just as God is holy (1:15-16).

On the other hand, he dissuades them from returning to the sinful activities in which they were engaged with pagans before their conversion (1:14). This pre-conversion life is characterised as the empty way of life handed down to them by their forefathers (1:18b).

Similarly in 2:11-12, Peter uses the characteristic paraenetic formula of persuasion and dissuasion to exhort his readers. Again addressing them as πάροικοι and παρεπίδημοι, he persuades them, on the one hand, to live good lives among the pagans (2:12). On the other hand, he dissuades them from conforming to their sinful desires (2:11). Similarly at 4:3 he tells his readers that they have spent enough time with other pagans in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry, and must cease from these activities.

The two sides of Peter's paraenetic approach - exhortation to his readers to live good lives, coupled with pleas to them not to return to former patterns of life - continue in 3:13-4:6 and 4:12 -19. The focus here is on doing good, even when it means having to suffer for it. They must always be prepared to give an answer for the hope which they have. They must also be prepared to suffer for doing good, and not for doing evil. They must not be ashamed of Christ, but must rejoice in suffering for Christ.

The addressees also receive instructions on their relationships with other Christians in the Christian community. Peter exhorts them to love one another (1:22; 3:8; 4:8), expressing this love by the offering of hospitality and serving one another with the gifts that God has given

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admonition aimed at affecting the audience's attitudes and behaviour": L. Thurén, *Argument and Theology in 1 Peter: The Origins of Christian Paraenesis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995) 18.

[32]See pp. 20-24.

(4:7-11). But they must desist from all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind in their relationships with one another (2:1-2).

ii) Use of Rhetorical Devices

Peter's appeal is initially based on ἦθος. He identifies himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ (1:1). He addresses the readers with the affectionate term ἀγαπητοί (2:11; 4:12). He expects that the readers will recognise his authority, and thus be put in a positive frame of mind to listen to his exhortation.

Secondly, Peter uses antithesis to persuade his readers to follow one way of life and to reject another. This is clear from 2:11-12, as we have seen above. He also uses antithesis to persuade his readers, as members of a new community, to love one another (1:22). This is contrasted with a list of vices in 2:1.

Thirdly, Peter uses another paraenetic device, the household code. Generally, household codes focused on three levels of submission and reciprocal obligations within the extended family: wives and husbands, slaves and masters, and children and parents. 1 Peter modifies the traditional household code, omitting the parent-child pair. Instead the letter includes the relationship between citizens and governing authorities.[33]

A further distinctive feature of the Petrine household code is that it focuses the burden of responsibility on the subordinate members, namely the citizen, the slave and the wife. These are the three categories under which Peter addresses the believers, and they are exhorted to submit to unbelievers, whether they be governing authorities, masters, or husbands. Thus he adapts the household code to instruct Christians on their relationships with non-Christians.

To support his paraenetic instruction, Peter uses παραδείγματα. In 1:16, he exhorts them to be holy, for God is holy. In 2:21, Christ, the innocent sufferer, is the example for Christian slaves when they have to suffer for doing good.[34] In 3:6, Christian wives are encouraged to be submissive to their own husbands like Sarah.[35] In all these instances, the examples function as models for Christians in Asia Minor to emulate.

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[33]With regard to relationships among Christians, he also modifies the traditional household code to instruct elders and young men on their responsibilities to one another (5:1-5).

[34]See pp. 165-169.

[35]See pp. 187-193.

Lastly, Peter uses the verb παρακαλέω to express his intention in writing his letter (2:11; 5:1,12). παρακαλέω is a word commonly used in paraenesis.[36] Ancient authors often make comments on the genre of their work in their writing, and their own description of the work is an important genre determiner.[37] Thus Peter's explicit use of παρακαλέω points to the intention of his letter as a paraenetic letter.

The above analysis shows that Peter adapts the paraenetic form common in the Graeco-Roman world to instruct his readers on how to relate to Christians within their congregations, and to non-Christians in society. With regard to the former, he exhorts them to love one another. With regard to the latter, he urges his readers to live good lives among the pagans, and not to return to their old sinful desires.

2) Implications of Genre for Social Setting

Thus far, I have argued that 1 Peter is an adaptation of the paraenetic style of letter writing. The choice of style was important to ancient authors, as evidenced by the way Demetrius and Libanius classify letters in their handbooks.[38] As different styles were used for different situations, the issue arises whether Peter's use of the paraenetic style reveals something of the social setting of Christians in Asia Minor. I turn now to consider this issue.

a) Social Occasions for Paraenesis

Most studies of paraenesis have focused on its origin and literary form. But one must go beyond this to enquire into its social setting and social function. Perdue applies his study of paraenesis and its implications for social setting and social function to the epistle of James.[39] I propose to apply Perdue's helpful insights to 1 Peter.

Perdue examines paraenetic texts which either speak directly or indirectly about their particular social settings. From these texts, he makes some deductions about the social

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[36]E.g. the use of παρακαλέω in 1 Thess. 2:12; 4:1,10; 5:14; for the genre of 1 Thessalonians as paraenesis, see A.J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) 70ff.

[37]G.N. Stanton, "Matthew: βίβλος, εὐαγγέλιον, or βιός?" in F. van Segbroeck, et al (eds.), *The Four Gospels: Festschrift Frans Neirynck* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992) 1196.

[38]See also Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation,* 23-29.

[39]L.G. Perdue, "Paraenesis and the Epistle of James," *ZNW* 72 (1981) 241-256; "The Social Character of Paraenesis and Paraenetic Literature," *Semeia* 50 (1990) 5-39.

settings of paraenesis. His first observation is that paraenesis involved a relationship in which instruction was given by one who was the moral superior. This could be a teacher-student relationship, a parent-child relationship, or another relationship in which one of the parties is seen as in some way authoritative.

Perdue's second observation concerns the recipients of paraenesis in ancient texts. He observes that "the recipient of the teaching is usually young, inexperienced, and either has entered or is about to enter a new stage of life and/or social role involving new responsibilities."[40]

However Perdue qualifies this observation by saying that paraenesis was not only directed at inexperienced youths. Everyone needed to receive frequent admonitions, as Seneca stressed:

> We should, therefore, have a guardian, as it were, to pluck us continually by the ear and dispel rumours and protest against popular enthusiasms. For you are mistaken if you suppose that our faults are inborn in us; they have come from without, have been heaped upon us. Hence, by receiving frequent admonitions, we can reject the opinions which din about our ears.[41]

Whether young or old, everyone needed instruction at different stages of life, or when assuming different responsibilities in life.

Perdue builds on what Arnold van Gennep calls *rites de passage*, which the latter defines as "rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age."[42] The most obvious types of *rites de passage* relate to the important times of birth, puberty, marriage and death. But rites of passage can also accompany any change from one state to another.[43] They can also apply to entry into a new achieved status, whether this be a political office or membership of an exclusive club or secret society. They may also admit persons into membership of a religious group which does not include the whole of society, or qualify these persons for official duties of the group.

From this, Perdue deduces three types of transition which may serve as the social

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[40]Perdue, "The Social Character of Paraenesis," 15.

[41]Seneca, *Ep.* 94.55.

[42]Perdue, "The Social Character of Paraenesis," 10.

[43]V. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967) 93-95.

occasions for paraenesis:[44]

i) transition through the biological stages of life (birth, puberty, marriage, parenting, retirement, and death). Societies and communities all develop their own sets of rituals and instructions for each significant stage in the individual's life. Paraenetic instruction during such occasions directs the attention of the individual or group to their future responsibilities and behaviour expected in society and in community.[45]

ii) entry into roles which are determined by age, gender, marriage, legal status, class, and occupation. There is much paraenetic literature on the instruction of students, rulers, bureaucrats, parents, children and spouses. Often these are given upon their entrance into new social roles and their accompanying responsibilities.[46]

iii) assumption of membership in groups and associations. In this connection, paraenesis is used by groups and communities within the larger society for teaching their novices and members. This instruction would be given to prepare members to enter the group or society, and would be repeated later, especially during important ritual occasions.

b) Application to 1 Peter

Perdue's general analysis of the social setting of paraenesis can be applied to 1 Peter. Firstly, paraenesis is given when individuals or groups assume new social roles with their attending duties and responsibilities. We have seen in Chapter 1 of this thesis that conversion has made a radical transformation to the social relationships of Christians with non-Christians. This change has necessitated instruction on their new roles and responsibilities as Christians *vis-à-vis* their non-Christian governing authorities, their non-Christian masters, their non-Christian husbands and their non-Christian friends. These roles are new in that they are now relating to them as Christians (2:13-3:12). They also need instruction on how to relate to other members of the Christian community (1:22, 3:8, 4:7-11). The more mature Christians in the community need guidelines on how to be elders (5:1-4), while the younger members require guidance on how to relate with the elders (5:5).

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[44]Perdue, "The Social Character of Paraenesis," 19.

[45]One example we have already seen is Isocrates' letter to Demonicus written after the death of Demonicus' father.

[46]See Plutarch's *Advice to Bride and Groom* addressed to Pollianus and Eurydice on the occasion of their marriage.

Secondly, paraenetic instruction is given to members in social groups and communities. Christians in 1 Peter require instruction on their new status and identity, and their responsibilities in the community. They need instruction on how to worship God in a corporate manner, how to love one another and how to serve one another. They also require teaching on how to relate to the larger pagan society, of which they are members.

Thus we see that the literary genre of 1 Peter has implications for its social setting. The social occasions for paraenesis correspond to the social setting described in the preceding two chapters. Peter adapts the paraenetic style of letter writing to instruct Christians in Asia Minor on their new status and identity, and their new roles as Christians in their social relationships with non-Christians, and with other Christians.

3) Social Function of Paraenesis

a) Socialisation

Having examined the social setting of paraenesis in 1 Peter, I shall move on to consider the social function of paraenesis. Again I find Perdue's insights helpful here. According to Perdue, the primary function of paraenesis is socialisation,[47] which Berger and Luckmann define as "the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society or sector of it."[48] Primary socialisation takes place during one's childhood, when through one's parents and the immediate kinship group (e.g., grandparents, uncles, and aunts), one acquires attitudes, beliefs, norms and behaviour. These form a social reality for the child.

As the child grows older, the process of secondary socialisation takes over when he enters the adult stages of life, joins various social groups or is elevated to new social roles. In Perdue's words:

> Paraenesis, then, is a means by which an individual is introduced to the group's or rôle's social knowledge, including especially norms and values pertaining to group or rôle behaviour, internalises this knowledge, and makes it the basis for both behaviour and the meaning system by which he interprets and orders his world.[49]

Paraenesis enables one to construct a new social reality as one enters the adult stages of life

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[47]Perdue, "The Social Character of Paraenesis," 24.

[48]P.L. Berger & T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin Books, 1991) 150.

[49]Perdue, "Paraenesis and the Epistle of James," 251.

with new social roles and membership in new social groups.

In his book *Metaphor and Composition in 1 Peter*, Martin applies Perdue's concept of the social function of paraenesis and socialisation to 1 Peter.[50] Martin finds that Perdue's discussion of this issue is "in highly theoretical terms,"[51] for the latter has not sufficiently considered the context of Graeco-Roman society. Thus Martin seeks to remedy this by setting the process of socialisation in the context of Graeco-Roman society.

Martin argues that the objective of socialisation is the attainment of δόξα (honour/glory), which was also the objective of paraenesis in Graeco-Roman society. He quotes at length from Cicero, who states that there are three prerequisites to attaining glory (*gloria*), namely goodwill, confidence, and admiration and esteem of the people.[52] This could be achieved by good conduct, and this was the primary objective of the socialisation process effected by paraenesis in Greco-Roman society. Martin writes:

> Esteem and reputation, not only by one's peers and superiors but also by one's inferiors, were highly sought after. Socialisation involved performing one's duties, discharging one's responsibilities, and relating to others so one could attain δόξα.[53]

However, Martin sees that the addressees of 1 Peter face a dilemma because "the acceptance of these rules of conduct by the Christian community has not led to a state of δόξα but just the reverse."[54] They suffer persecution and abuse. According to Martin, Peter resolves this dilemma by resorting to eschatological ideas in his paraenesis. Peter affirms that the end is δόξα but in the meantime they would have to go through a period of suffering. Jesus himself had to go through suffering before attaining δόξα.

Although Martin's work is very helpful and he is right to understand socialisation in the context of ancient Graeco-Roman society, he is mistaken on two points. First, his view of the dilemma faced by Peter's readers is based on the assumption that Christians in Asia Minor are encountering hostility and abuse only as a consequence of doing good. In chapter 1 of this thesis we have seen that the Christians suffer abuse at the hands of non-Christians because of

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[50]Martin, *Metaphor and Composition*, 103-118. However, Martin has made no reference to Perdue's 1990 article.

[51]Martin, *Metaphor and Composition*, 108.

[52]Cicero, *Off.* 2.9.31; 1.13.44.

[53]Martin, *Metaphor and Composition*, 108.

[54]Martin, *Metaphor and Composition*, 111.

their withdrawal from them (4:3-4). It is to address this hostile situation that Peter exhorts Christians to conduct themselves well among the unbelievers in order to silence their false accusations and slander, and perhaps to win them over (2:12, 15; 3:1, 16).

Secondly, while Martin may be correct in his assessment that the attainment of δόξα in Graeco-Roman society was the object of ancient paraenesis, he is wrong in assuming that this is the same objective which Peter has in mind for his readers. In the ancient world, δόξα could mean one of several things. It could mean (a) an expectation; (b) a notion, opinion or judgement; (c) the opinion that others have of you (in most cases this refers to good reputation and honour); and (d) external appearance.[55]

In the context of Cicero's discourse on how to attain glory (*gloria*), the word would mean "the opinion that others have of you," for as we have noted, according to Cicero *gloria* depends upon "the affection, the confidence, and the mingled admiration and esteem of the people."[56] Thus ancient paraenesis would encourage people to pursue something and abstain from other things in order that they might attain good repute and honour in the eyes of their fellowmen. They accomplish this through good works, good conduct and justice. The honour and good-will of their fellow-citizens would help them in many ways, especially in the acquisition of friends.[57]

Peter would have been aware of this social convention in the ancient world, and so were his readers. Thus he encourages his readers to live good lives among non-Christians and to do good to them, for he knows that people in society will be able to see these good works and give them due honour and credit.[58] He would also be aware of his readers' expectation of receiving honour when they have done good. For that reason, he asks a highly rhetorical question in 3:13: "Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?" The obvious answer which his readers would give was "No one!"[59]

However Peter is also aware that there are times when suffering ensues even when his readers have done good (3:14; 4:12-16). Hence he exhorts them to do good, even though they

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[55]Liddell & Scott, 444. See also *TDNT* II:233-237.

[56]Cicero, *Off.* 2.9.31.

[57]Cicero, *Off.* 1.8.31.

[58]For a more detailed discussion, see Chapter 4 below.

[59]For a fuller discussion of 3:13, see chapter 8.

have to suffer (3:17; 4:19). But it is important to note that he is not advocating good behaviour for the attainment of honour and good reputation as though this were an end in itself. His purpose in instructing Christians to do good to non-Christians is to encourage them to remain in their social relationships with non-Christians, and not to withdraw totally from non-Christian society. In order to do good to non-Christians, they must continue to relate socially with them, although they can no longer participate with them in certain activities (4:3). Their good deeds may even win over some of the non-Christians (3:1-2). Further, doing good to non-Christians will confound their wrongful and malicious accusations, and will shame and silence them (2:12,15;3:15-16). This is because they will see their good conduct, which in their cultural and social context should be met with goodwill, confidence, admiration and esteem of the people rather than hostility and abuse.

But even if the hostility of the pagans towards the Christians causes them to withhold the honour and esteem due to them, a possibility which Peter concedes (3:13; 4:15-16), it does not negate his paraenetic instruction to them to live good lives among non-Christians. He is not so much stressing the end as he is emphasising the means. He is not so much concerned with the attainment of δόξα as he is concerned about their good conduct in their social relations with non-Christians. His intention is that living good lives among the pagans will be their means of induction back into the pagan society which they will now enter as Christians. This process of induction into pagan society is socialisation, and not as Martin asserts, the attainment of δόξα.

Thus far we have seen that Peter adapted the paraenetic style of letter writing from the ancient world to exhort Christians in Asia Minor regarding their social relationships with non-Christians, and with Christians. The basic paraenesis with regard to their social relationships with non-Christians is, on the one hand, to abstain from their evil desires and their participation with non-Christians in sinful activities, and on the other hand, to remain in these social relationships with non-Christians and to do good. Christians needed this instruction because they were assuming new roles and responsibilities upon their conversion. As the primary aim of paraenesis is socialisation, we turn now to examine how the paraenesis of 1 Peter would enable Christians to be inducted into pagan society again.

b) Induction into Society

On the one level, the paraenetic material in 1 Peter leads to the induction of Christians into the Christian community, and the legitimation of this new social reality. When they become Christians, they cease from their sinful activities with the pagans (4:3), and enter into a new community of believers. Berger considers the experience of religious conversion to be such a totally new transformation of one's social reality that he prefers to call this process "re-socialisation."[60] He describes this process as follows:

> The plausibility structure must become the individual's world, displacing all other worlds, especially the world the individual 'inhabited' before his alternation. This requires segregation of the individual from the 'inhabitants' of other worlds, especially his 'cohabitants' in the world he has left behind. Ideally this will be physical segregation. The alternating individual disaffiliates himself from his previous world and the plausibility structure that sustained it, bodily if possible, mentally if not. In either case he is no longer 'yoked together with unbelievers', and thus is protected from their potential reality-disrupting influence. Such segregation is particularly important in the early stages of alternation (the 'novitiate' phase). Once the new reality has congealed, circumspect relations with outsiders may again be entered into, although those outsiders who used to be biographically significant are still dangerous.[61]

The new world into which Christians were inducted is depicted in 1 Peter. They have been born again (1:23), and have become like newborn babies (2:2). They are members of one big family; they are brothers (1:22; 5:9). They are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God" (2:9). Within this new community, they worship together, love and serve one another (2:4-6; 1:22; 3:8-9; 4:7-11; 5:1-6). All these have replaced their old social world or reality. Christians are alienated from their old pagan associations, and new ties are formed with other believers. According to Meeks, the letter which contains the paraenetic instruction becomes

> part of a process of resocialization which undertakes to substitute a new identity, new social relations, and a new set of values for those which each person had absorbed in growing up.[62]

However, total segregation of the Christian community from the larger pagan society is not what Peter has in mind, for he recognises that Christians are still members of the larger pagan

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[60]Berger & Luckmann, *Social Construction of Reality*, 176.

[61]Berger & Luckmann, *Social Construction of Reality*, 178.

[62]Meeks, *Moral World*, 126. However Meeks's caution that no conversion is ever total must be heeded: "The process of resocialization cannot simply obliterate the ways of thinking, feeling, and valuing that were part of the person before the change began" (126).

society. After conversion, they must relate to non-Christian governing authorities, masters and husbands, but in a way different from their pre-conversion days (2:13-3:7). Christians must live good lives among the pagans and do good works, which non-Christians would be able to recognise as good. Thus Peter uses paraenetic instruction for their induction into the larger pagan society. Paraenesis fulfills this function for the Christians are "re-entering" pagan society, not as pagans, but as Christians.

4) Summary

Peter uses the paraenetic letter to exhort Christians concerning their social relationships, which have been radically changed after their conversion. His choice of the paraenetic genre gives us some indication as to the social setting of 1 Peter. Ancient paraenesis was used when groups or individuals assumed new social roles with their attending duties and responsibilities. In 1 Peter Christians need instruction on their new roles as Christians, and on how to relate to non-Christians in society, and to other Christians. Peter persuades his readers to remain in their social relationships with non-Christians, and do good within these relationships. He also dissuades them from returning to their old evil desires and participating in sinful activities with non-Christians. In this way Christians could avert the danger of withdrawing totally from non-Christian society. When viewed from the perspective of socialisation, we see that paraenesis is used to induct Christians in their re-entry into the larger pagan society, and also into the Christian community.

PART II

CHAPTER 4

"DOING GOOD" IN 1 PETER

(2:12,15,20; 3:6,11,13,16; 4:19)

Part I of this thesis has set out the social setting of Christians in 1 Peter. Christians in Asia Minor found that conversion had affected their social relationships in a radical way. On the one hand, they became members of a new community of believers, which comprised predominantly Gentiles of mixed social and economic status, including some women and slaves. On the other hand, Christians found themselves alienated from non-Christians upon their conversion, as they could no longer participate in social and religious activities which were incompatible with their new way of life (4:3-4). Their withdrawal from these activities had generated hostility from non-Christians, who abused them with malicious slander and false accusations (2:12; 3:16; 4:4, 12-16).

Faced with hostility, Christians tended to withdraw even further from their association with non-Christians, and to draw their boundaries even more tightly around themselves. In such a situation, they needed instructions on how to relate to one another in a community facing external pressure, and how to relate to non-Christians, who were the source of hostility.

Peter used the paraenetic form of letter to instruct them. As for their relations with non-Christians, Peter dissuades them from yielding to their evil desires, so that they will not return to the sinful lifestyle they had before their conversion (1:14; 2:1; 4:3).[1] On the other hand, he persuades them to live good lives among non-Christians, and to do good (2:12). This implies that they would have to remain in their social relationships with non-Christians, thus overcoming the temptation to withdraw totally from non-Christian society.

Part II of this thesis will examine each of the relationships in 2:13-3:12 in greater detail. These social relationships must be viewed against the social setting set out in Part I of this thesis. A major emphasis in these social relationships between Christians and non-Christians is "doing good", which will be the subject of this chapter. I shall first establish that "doing

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[1]See Chapter 1 above.

good" is a predominant theme in 1 Peter, used exclusively in the context of social relationships between Christian and non-Christians. Then I shall examine the meaning of "doing good" in 1 Peter, addressing the question, What type of "good works" did Peter have in mind?

1) "Doing Good" and "Good Works" : A Predominant Theme in 1 Peter

1 Peter uses three different terms for "doing good" and "good works" in his letter: ἀγαθοποιεῖν to denote the verb, to do good, and καλὰ ἔργα and τὸ ἀγαθόν for good works. A study of these terms in 1 Peter will show that the letter attributes a very significant place to good works, which are discussed exclusively in the context of social relationships between Christians and non-Christians. These social relationships are portrayed as hostile, and the letter advocates good works as a response to hostility from non-Christians.

i) ἀγαθοποιεῖν

The most frequently used word for doing good is ἀγαθοποιεῖν, appearing six times in the letter (2:14,15,20; 3:6,17; 4:19). This word occurs only four other times in the rest of the NT (Luke 6:9,33,35; 3 John 11). It is a key word in the letter, and its significance must not be overlooked.

Ἀγαθοποιεῖν occurs four times in 2:13-3:12, the section addressing social relationships with non-Christians (2:14,15,20; 3:6). In 2:15 Peter exhorts Christians to do good, for this will silence the ignorant talk of foolish men (ἀγαθοποιοῦντας φιμοῦν τὴν τῶν ἀφρόνων ἀνθρώπων ἀγνωσίαν). This is in the context of relations between Christians and their non-Christian governing authorities and their non-Christian fellow citizens. Christian slaves are encouraged to endure suffering for doing good to their non-Christian masters, and not for doing wrong (2:20). In 3:1-6 Peter encourages Christian wives to do good in the hope that their good conduct may win over their non-Christian husbands.

The other two occurrences of ἀγαθοποιεῖν are found in the passages relating to the suffering of Christians at the hands of non-Christians. In 3:17, Peter asserts that it is "better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil". This follows from his assurance in 3:14 that they will be blessed when they suffer for doing good, and his injunction in 3:15-16 that they should "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." When they answer with gentleness, non-Christians will be ashamed of

the way they have slandered their good behaviour. Again ἀγαθοποιεῖν is used in the context of social relationships between Christians and non-Christians.

The last occurrence of ἀγαθοποιεῖν is in 4:19, where Peter exhorts those who are suffering according to God's will to commit themselves to God and to continue to do good (παρατιθέσθωσαν τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν ἐν ἀγαθοποιΐᾳ). This comes at the end of another section on suffering in which Peter reiterates that if they should suffer, it should be for the sake of Christ and not for doing evil (4:12-16). The implied context is again that of social relations between Christians and non-Christians.

The above survey shows that ἀγαθοποιεῖν is used exclusively in connecton with social relationships between Christians and non-Christians. These relationships are portrayed as hostile, and it is in this context of hostility from non-Christians that Peter encourages Christians to respond by doing good. In 2:15, Christians are the subject of ignorant talk of foolish men, but such people will be silenced by the good works of Christians. In 2:18-20, the unjust suffering of Christian slaves at the hands of their harsh masters implies the possibility of conflict and some degree of hostility and persecution from non-Christian masters.[2] By doing good and enduring suffering for doing good, Christian slaves will be commended (2:19-20).

In 3:6 the exhortation to Christian wives not to give way to fear suggests that they may be subject to abuse in the home. Again they are encouraged to respond with good works. In 3:13-17 and 4:12-19 hostility is evident in the discussion of suffering itself. More specifically, this hostility is manifested in insults and malicious slander from non-Christians (3:16; 4:14). Once again, Peter advocates good works as a response to hostility from non-Christians.

ii) τὸ ἀγαθόν

The same theme of good works as a response to hostility from non-Christians can also be seen in the use of the other two terms denoting good works. τὸ ἀγαθόν occurs three times in 1 Peter (3:11,13,16). We have seen earlier that 3:13 and 16 occur in the context of hostile relations between Christians and non-Christians. The same is true of 3:11, where Peter cites Psalm 34:14 in support of his exhortation to Christians to refrain from evil and do good.

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[2]Michaels, 142.

iii) καλός

The third term used for good works in 1 Peter is καλός. This occurs twice in 2:12, firstly to describe the lives which Christians should lead (τὴν ἀναστροφὴν ... ἔχοντες καλήν) and then to characterise their works (τῶν καλῶν ἔργων). Again the word is used in the context of Christians living among non-Christians (τὴν ἀναστροφὴν ὑμῶν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν), where Christians face malicious gossip and slander from non-Christians (καταλαλοῦσιν ὑμῶν ὡς κακοποιῶν).

The above survey shows that doing good works is a predominant theme in 1 Peter. All references to doing good or good works appear in the context of relations between Christians and non-Christians. This unanimity is striking. In particular, these texts also point to hostile situations in which Christians were subject to malicious slander, insult, false accusations and other verbal abuse from non-Christians. According to Peter, the appropriate response to this antagonism is doing good.

The teaching of good works is not unique to 1 Peter. It appears in other parts of the NT. In the next section, we will examine the use of good works in the rest of the NT to see if it sheds any light on our understanding of good works in 1 Peter.

2) "Doing Good" and "Good Works" in the rest of the NT

a) In the Gospels

i) Similarity between 1 Peter 2:12 and Matthew 5:16

Many scholars have detected a close similarity between 2:12 (τῶν καλῶν ἔργων ἐποπτεύοντες δοξάσωσιν) and Matthew 5:16 (ἴδωσιν ... τὰ καλὰ ἔργα ... δοξάσωσιν).[3] We will examine this, paying particular attention to the context and the meaning of good works.

The relationship between 2:12 and Matthew 5:16 has been the subject of various studies, with different issues in mind. Gundry[4] and Best[5] are concerned primarily with issues of authorship and the authenticity of the Gospel tradition. Their study leads them to diametrically

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[3]Hort is of the opinion that the similarity cannot be coincidental: Hort, 136. See also Selwyn, 171; Beare, 111.

[4]R.H. Gundry, "`Verba Christi` in 1 Peter," *NTS* 13 (1966-67) 336-350.

[5]E. Best, "1 Peter and the Gospel Tradition," *NTS* 16 (1969-70) 95-113.

opposing conclusions.[6] Kohler examines this similarity with the issue of literal dependency in mind. He notes that Peter has not taken up important redactional terminology in Matthew 5:16, as in τὸν πατέρα ὑμῶν τὸν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.[7] While he concedes that such similarity leaves open the possibility that Peter knew and adapted Matthew 5:16, he thinks that it cannot be conclusively proved.

Although the proof of dependency is impossible, the close similarity between 2:12 and Matthew 5:16 suggests that both Peter and Matthew might have relied on a common tradition which they adapted for their own contexts and purposes.[8] Michaels is of the view that Peter was drawing on the Jesus tradition to define for his readers the purpose of the conduct he requires.[9] He examines the similarity and the differences in 2:12 and Matthew 5:16, and concludes that

> whatever the exact form of the saying as Peter knew it, his own concern is to adapt it to the social situation of his readers living among the 'Gentiles,' where the distinction between believer and unbeliever is clearcut, and where the persecutions predicted in the Sermon on the Mount are beginning to take place.[10]

Luz takes a similar view. Commenting on good works in Matthew 5:16, he notes that both Matthew and 1 Peter "are in agreement that precisely in the situation of persecution" mission activity and good works are decisive.[11]

Both Michaels and Luz seem correct in their observation that Peter was thinking of the context within which the words in Matthew 5:16 were first spoken by Matthew's Jesus. Matthew 5:16 is part of a larger treatment of relationships between Christians and non-

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[6]Gundry works from the assumption of Petrine authorship, and he proceeds to test this assumption by an examination of the allusions to *verba Christi* in the letter. He argues that since the *verba Christi* fall into a pattern which tallies with what we would have expected the Peter of the gospels to have remembered of Jesus's words, his assumption of Petrine authorship must stand. Best, on the other hand, argues that contacts between 1 Peter and the gospel tradition lie in two blocks in Luke 6 and 12 and in two or three isolated sayings (Matt. 5:16; Mark 10:45; and possibly Matt. 5:10). In Best's view, these scattered allusions are not sufficient to uphold Petrine authorship or the authenticity of the gospel tradition. See Gundry's reply in "Further *Verba* on *Verba Christi* in First Peter," *Biblica* 55 (1974) 211-232.

[7]W.-D. Kohler, *Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums in der Zeit vor Irenäus* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1987) 484.

[8]R.A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding* (Waco: Word Books, 1982) 124.

[9]Michaels, 118.

[10]Michaels, 119.

[11]U. Luz, *Matthew 1-7* (ET; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989) 252.

Christians:[12] Matthew 5:11-12 paints a picture of hostility that is envisaged between Christians and their persecutors and false accusers (Matt. 5:11-12); and in Matthew 5:13-15, the disciples are exhorted to live as the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world." These metaphors refer to their role in the world. In the Beatitudes, it is "not religious inwardness [that] is praised as blessed, but Christians who practice their faith in the world in their relationships with other people."[13] Thus, by his allusion to Jesus' saying in Matthew 5:16, Peter stresses a similar context of hostility in social relationships between Christians and non-Christians, to which the former must respond by doing good.

Although the social context for the injunction in Matthew 5:16 and 1 Peter 2:12 is similar, the meaning of doing good in both instances is not. In Matthew 5:16, the good works which the disciples are taught to do are not restricted to the conduct of the disciples in their dealings with pagans. The good works (τὰ καλὰ ἔργα) in Matthew 5:16 are identified later in 5:17-7:12, and include their conduct towards other disciples and their piety towards God.[14]

Matthew 5:16 plays a significant part in the structure of the Sermon on the Mount. On the one hand, it is the climactic statement of verses 3 to 16, where the situation portrayed is that of a hostile social environment in which the disciples are exhorted to do good deeds.[15] On the other hand, Matthew 5:16 constitutes a "heading" or an introduction to the exposition of good works in the main part of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:17-7:12).

Before elaborating on the meaning of good works in Matthew 5:17-7:12, Matthew's Jesus warns his disciples that they cannot enter the kingdom of heaven unless their righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law (Matt. 5:20). He proceeds then to explain how they can surpass the righteousness of the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law.

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[12]R.H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 73-78. It is perhaps significant that Gundry has changed his subtitle in the second edition: in the first edition it was *A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art*. See also C.L. Blomberg, *Matthew* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992) 103.

[13]Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 243.

[14]W.D. Davies & D.C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1988) I:479. In Luz's view, the good works in Matt. 5:16 are defined both by the preceding Beatitudes and by the following Antitheses in 5:21-48.

[15]Luz calls Matt. 5:16 the "summarizing key of the pericope," with its perspective shifting from the persons addressed in Matthew 5:3-15 to their works in Matthew 5:17-7:12: Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 252. See also Guelich's view that Matt. 5:13-16 plays a "pivotal role" in the structure of the Sermon by bridging the Beatitudes on the one hand, and the demands of 5:17-7:12 on the other: Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 130-131.

Here ἡ δικαιοσύνη πλεῖον τῶν γραμματέων καὶ φαρισαίων in Matthew 5:20 is equated with τὰ καλὰ ἔργα in Matthew 5:16. The good works or "higher righteousness" are summarised in 7:12: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."

These good works can be categorised into three groups: a) the way Jesus' disciples are to conduct themselves with other disciples (e.g., Matt. 5:21-26); b) the attitude of the disciples toward God, expressed in the three forms of piety characteristic of Jewish worship, *viz.*, almsgiving (Matt. 6:2-4), prayer (Matt. 6:5-15), and fasting (Matt. 6:16-18); and c) the way the disciples are to conduct themselves with an evil person (Matt. 5:39-42), or their enemies and persecutors (Matt. 5:44-48). Thus the context of Matthew 5:16 shows that good works include their conduct and attitude towards God, towards other disciples, and towards pagans.

However this is not the case in 1 Peter, as we have already seen. τῶν καλῶν ἔργων in 2:12 refers only to good works by Christians in the context of their social relationships with non-Christians. This is evident in 2:13-3:12, which deals with specific social relationships between Christians and non-Christians. It is here that words like ἀγαθοποιεῖν and τὸ ἀγαθόν can be found.

1 Peter does not overlook relationships between Christians, but these relationships are to be characterised by love for one another (1:22, 3:8; 4:8), and not by good works. Further, terms denoting doing good or good works do not occur in the section concerning the way they worship God (2:4-8). Thus while the close similarity between 2:12 and Matthew 5:16 underscores a similar context for doing good works by Christians, Peter has chosen a more restricted definition of doing good than that in Matthew 5:16.

The meaning of good works must therefore be determined from its individual context. A study of the use of ἀγαθοποιεῖν, ἔργον ἀγαθόν and ἔργον καλόν in the rest of the NT will further confirm that there is no fixed or single meaning of good works.

ii) In Luke's Gospel

ἀγαθοποιεῖν occurs three times in Luke (6:9,33,35). Luke 6:9 portrays Jesus as one who went about doing good. Here ἀγαθοποιεῖν is qualified by ψυχὴν σῶσαι, and refers to Jesus' act of healing the man with the shrivelled hand on the Sabbath. The portrayal of Jesus as one who went about doing good is also found in Peter's speech at Cornelius' house in Acts 10:38.

Having been anointed by God in the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus of Nazareth went around doing good and healing those who were under the power of the devil. Although the word used for good works here is εὐεργετῶν, which is usually the term for benefactors, Peter in his speech in Cornelius' house had no doubt that Jesus was one who went around doing good.

In Luke 6:33 and 35, where ἀγαθοποιεῖν occurs, the context is that of relating to one's enemies. Here Jesus teaches that one's attitude towards one's enemies should be characterised by love and good works. An explicit example of good works is lending without expecting any returns. Again the context of good works here is hostile relationships between Christians and non-Christians.

b) In the Pastorals

ἔργον ἀγαθόν and ἔργον καλόν are often used to denote good works in the epistles. Good works were clearly fundamental to the life of early Christians. In Ephesians 2:10, Christians who have been saved by grace must do the good works (ἐπὶ ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς) which God has prepared in advance for them to do. The prayer in Colossians 1:10 is that Christians should bear fruit in every good work (ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ καρποφοροῦντες). Often πᾶν is used to qualify the good works.[16] But the contexts of these verses do not specify the type of good works which Christians are required to do. There are, however, other passages where good works are more explicitly spelt out. I shall focus on two of these passages, both from the pastoral epistles.

In 1 Timothy good works is a significant theme. The author exhorts different groups of people in the church to do good works in their lives. In 1 Timothy 2:9-10, women are encouraged to adorn themselves with good works (ἔργων ἀγαθῶν), to "dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes".

The widows of the church form the second group; they are encouraged to develop good works in their lives. 1 Timothy 5:10 gives examples of good works (ἔργοις καλοῖς): "bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds" (παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ).[17] These good works are all directed to other members of the Christian community.

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[16]See, e.g., Col. 1:10; 2 Tim. 2:21;3:17.

[17]See also 3 John 11 where doing good refers to offering hospitality to Christians.

Thirdly, in 1 Timothy 6:18, the rich are urged "to be rich in good deeds" (ἔργοις καλοῖς) by their generosity and their willingness to share. The context does not give any indication as to the recipients of their generosity, but it probably refers to those in the Christian community.

Although the author singles out only three groups to do good works, this does not mean that others in the church are exempted from doing good. In 1 Timothy 3:1, the one who aspires to be an overseer desires a good work (καλοῦ ἔργου ἐπιθυμεῖ). Whatever good works Christians perform, they must be obvious (1 Tim. 5:15). Just as the sins of some men are obvious, so the good works of Christians must be evident for others to see. It is not clear from the verse to whom these good works must be manifest. From the three groups above, it appears that the intended sense is that good works must be obvious to other members of the Christian community. However it is highly probable that people outside the Christian community would also be interested in the conduct of Christians.

Good works in 1 Timothy are done by Christians primarily to benefit other members of the Christian community. In Titus, however, good works by Christians are done for the sake of non-Christians as well as for Christians. The author uses good works to distinguish between rebellious people (Tit. 1:10-16) and Christians. The former are "detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good" (ἔργον ἀγαθὸν: v.16). By contrast, Christians must "devote themselves to doing what is good" (καλῶν ἔργων: Tit. 3:14).

In Titus 2, the author stresses that Christians must do good works in order to create a positive impact on non-Christians. Here he urges Christians to do good to other members of the Christian community. Titus must instruct older women in the church to teach younger women what is good. Part of this teaching on good works relates to training younger women to be good wives: "to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind and to be subject to their own husbands (Tit. 2:4-5). The purpose of their good conduct is to ensure that no one will malign the Word of God.

As for the younger men in the church, Titus must set them an example by doing good (Tit. 2:6-8). The purpose is to stop their opponents from criticising them, for they will not have anything negative to say about Christians. Slaves are instructed to be subject to their masters in everything (Tit. 2:9-10). Slaves must please their masters, must not talk back to them or steal from them, but must show themselves to be trustworthy. δεσπόταις can refer to both Christian and non-Christian masters. Doing good is not specifically mentioned here, but this

is implied from the exhortation to refrain from doing anything evil. The purpose of their behaviour is to make the teaching about God attractive. Thus Christians are exhorted to do good within the Christian community, with the explicit purpose that these good works should have a positive impact on non-Christians.

Titus 3 continues with the theme of doing good. Here the focus is on Christians doing good to people outside the Christian community. The injunctions are addressed to all Christians. In Titus 3:1, Christians must subject themselves to the governing authorities, be obedient and be ready to do whatever is good (πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν). Verse 2 follows with further injunctions to all Christians. They must slander no-one, must aim to be peaceable and considerate, and show true humility towards all men. Good works in this context would include both civic duty towards governing authorities, and one's attitude and conduct towards non-Christians.[18] The use of "no-one" and "all men" in verse 2 would extend good works to all.

Again in Titus 3:8, the author stresses the need for Christians to devote themselves to doing good. He concludes his instruction concerning good works by setting the good works of Christians again in direct contrast to the conduct of the false teachers (Tit. 3:9-11).[19] Finally just before ending the letter, he reminds them again that Christians must learn to do good (3: 14).

Thus in the Pastorals, good works are directed towards both Christians and non-Christians. The objective of good works is to ensure that the pagans will have no opportunity to criticise Christians or to malign the Word of God.

c) In the Johannine Epistles

The final occurrence of ἀγαθοποιεῖν outside 1 Peter is in 3 John 11. Here, as in Luke 6:9, ἀγαθοποιεῖν is used in contrast to κακοποιεῖν.[20] In 3 John 11, the one who does good (ἀγαθοποιεῖν) is from God whereas the one who does evil (κακοποιεῖν) has not seen God. John urges Gaius to imitate what is good (ἀγαθόν). In the context of 3 John, doing good

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[18]G.D. Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* (Massachusetts: Hendricksen Publishers, 1984) 200.

[19]See Tit. 1:16.

[20]In 1 Peter, the same contrast can be seen in 2:12,14,15; 3:17.

refers to extending hospitality to Christians (v.8).[21] This is something which Diotrephes had refused to do. Such an example, John insists, must not be imitated.

d) Summary

The above survey of other NT passages shows that in the NT good works encompass a wide range of deeds, the meaning of which must be deduced from the context of each passage. The exhortation to do good is directed towards specific groups in the Christian congregations, to all believers, and also to non-Christians.

Good works in the NT include healing the sick, giving hospitality to Christians, doing good to one's enemies, washing the feet of saints, helping those in trouble, sharing one's riches, submitting to governing authorities, living peaceably and showing true humility towards all men. Christian wives must be good wives and mothers, and Christian slaves must not talk back to their masters or steal from them.

The lists of good works are not exhaustive. What is significant is that good works are directed towards both Christians and non-Christians. This can perhaps be best summarised by Paul's injunction to the Galatians to "do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the ~~the~~ family of believers" (Gal. 6:10).

However, the use of good works in 1 Peter is more restricted than in the NT passages examined above. Good works in 1 Peter are confined only to relationships between Christians and non-Christians. 1 Peter clearly distinguishes relationships between Christians and non-Christians, and relationships between Christians. While the writers of 1 Timothy 5:10 and 3 John 11 consider hospitality as a good work, 1 Peter views it as an expression of love among Christians (4:9). The question then arises, What kind of good works does 1 Peter have in mind? We turn now to this issue.

3) Meaning of "Doing Good" and "Good Works"

a) The Nature of Good Works in 1 Peter

The good works which 1 Peter has in mind are those that can be observed by onlookers.[22]

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[21]In 1 Tim. 5:10, showing hospitality is one of the good deeds which must characterise women in order to qualify for the list of widows.

[22]The same idea is present in Matt. 5:16 where the word used is ἴδωσιν.

This is evident from the use of the verb ἐποπτεύεω, which means to watch or to observe something.[23] ἐποπτεύεω is used only twice in the NT, and both occurrences are in 1 Peter (2:12; 3:2).

The use of this word in other ancient writings suggests an act of watching done with a view to taking a decision on the basis of one's observation.[24] It involves watching over a period of time with reflection, followed by a decision.[25]

In 2:12 Peter looks forward to the time when non-Christians, having watched the good works of Christians, would change their opinion of Christians and the God they worship. While previously they have wrongfully accused Christians, they will glorify God on the day of his visitation.[26] In 3:2 Peter exhorts believing wives to live and conduct themselves in such a way that their unbelieving husbands can observe their good behaviour, and be won over by their good conduct. Thus Peter exhorts Christians to do the kind of good works, which will be watched by non-Christians and be recognised as good, and which may in turn lead them to change their view of Christians and their God.

Peter's use of ἐποπτεύεω in 2:12 and 3:2 shows that he was aware that in the ancient world one's life and conduct would be watched and judged by other members of society. This practice is clearly illustrated by the account in Xenophon (428--354 BCE) of Socrates' search for a good man (ὁ καλὸς κἀγαθός). He had heard about one Ischomachus, who was regarded as a good man by "men, women, children, citizens and strangers."[27] Accordingly, he set out to meet him, and he asked him why he had been regarded as a good man. Ischomachus replied,

> I begin by worshipping the gods, and try to conduct myself in such a way that I may have health and strength in answer to my prayers, the respect of my fellow-citizens, the affection of my friends, safety with honour in war, and wealth increased by honest means.[28]

With his wealth, he was able to "honour the gods without counting the cost, help friends in

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[23]Aeschylus, *Cho.* 489, 985. See Liddell & Scott, 676.

[24]Polybius, *Hist.* 5.69.6; 31.15.10. See also Aeschylus, *Eum.* 224.

[25]Selwyn, 171.

[26]Goppelt suggests that ἐποπτεύοντες denotes the kind of seeing that leads to faith: Goppelt, 159.

[27]Xenophon, *Oec.* 6.17.

[28]Xenophon, *Oec.* 11.8.

need, and look to it that the city lacks no adornment that my means can supply."[29] All these good works would have been observed by others in his community, who had judged him to be a good man.

A similar portrait of a good man as judged by his peers could be seen in Dio's description of his father and his grandfather. Dio's forty-sixth discourse (101 CE) was directed to the people of his native city Prusa, who had experienced a bread riot the day before and had tried to attack the properties of Dio and an unnamed neighbour but had withdrawn at the last minute. The following day Dio defended himself before his fellow citizens by reminding them of the good reputation of his father and grandfather, and the good works they had done:

> Now with reference to my father, there is no need for me to tell whether he was a good citizen, for you are always singing his praises, both collectively and individually, whenever you refer to him, as being no ordinary citizen.[30]

His grandfather had spent his private fortune on public benefactions, and the citizens of Prusa held him in great friendship and esteem.[31] As for himself, Dio asks the people to "consider what sort of citizen I am," implying that they were able to watch his conduct and judge for themselves.[32] He points out that he has performed for them "the greatest liturgies" out of his own money, an act which his fellow citizens can see.[33] Also, none of his neighbours have ever lodged a complaint against him.[34]

The Graeco-Romans did not observe only one's good works. Disreputable deeds were also watched by others in the community, and judged accordingly. According to Plutarch's essay *On Being a Busybody*, the busybody can be easily identified by his conduct. They go about, picking out "the hidden and obscure troubles of every household."[35] They can usually be found in the bazaar, the market-place and the harbours, asking, "Is there any news?"[36] Their notoriety has earned them little esteem in the eyes of others in the community, who consider

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[29]Xenophon, *Oec.* 11.9.

[30]Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 46.2.

[31]Dio, *Or.* 46.4.

[32]Dio, *Or.* 46.7.

[33]Dio, *Or.* 46.5.

[34]Dio, *Or.* 46.7.

[35]Plutarch, *Mor.* 516E.

[36]Plutarch, *Mor.* 518F.

that they are "hated deservedly." Busybodies can be recognised by their infamous behaviour, and consequently are avoided by others.[37]

Peter's awareness that one's conduct and deeds, whether good or bad, could be observed and judged by people of one's community suggests that he had in mind a particular type of good works with a specific standard by which these works could be judged. What standard was this?

b) The Standard of "Good Works" in 1 Peter

Scholars are divided on the issue of the type of good works which 1 Peter has in mind. Some are of the view that Jewish works are in view while others argue for a Graeco-Roman perspective. According to Grundmann, good works as advocated by Jesus in the gospels reflect a Jewish influence, while in the Pastorals the term καλὰ ἔργα derives from popular usage influenced by Stoic ethics.[38] His reference to good works in 1 Peter is confined to a brief sentence: "Finally the usage of the Catholic Epistles and Hb. is along the same lines", i.e., it is influenced by Stoic ethics. He cites three verses in 1 Peter, two of which relate to love among believers (4:9,10). Grundmann's brief reference to good works in 1 Peter fails to acknowledge the significant place of good works in the letter, and does not offer any help in understanding what type of good works 1 Peter refer to.

Goppelt is of the opinion that 1 Peter shows the influence of Hellenistic Judaism:

> I Peter developed this technical term [ἀγαθοποιεῖν], to be sure, from the unspecialized use of the word in Hellenistic Judaism by modifying the Jewish and primitive tradition of "good works" (2:12); it wished thereby to address also Hellenistic peoples who were oriented toward καλοκαγαθία.[39]

However he does not elaborate on this.

Van Unnik gives a more in-depth treatment of this issue. He considers three possible interpretations of good works in 1 Peter, *viz*., the Christian, the Greek, and the Jewish.[40] First, he examines the early Christian concept of good works. He draws from Chrysostom and Cyril of Jerusalem, both 4th century CE Christian writers, and concludes that the early Christian

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[37]Plutarch, *Mor.* 519D.

[38]*TDNT* III:545-550.

[39]Goppelt, 177-178.

[40]Van Unnik, "The Teaching of Good Works in 1 Peter," 92-110.

concept of good works sees them as deeds of humiliation, which are not only concerned with the poor, but are a means to do away with post-baptismal sins so that Christians can have a right relationship with God.[41]

Next, he turns to the meaning of good works among the Greeks and the Romans. He argues that they regarded doing good as a "virtue of friendliness and willingness to help towards all men without distinction."[42] The objects of good works could be one's parents, friends, the state or nation. He cites Seneca's definition: "What then is a benefit? It is the act of a well-wisher who bestows joy and derives joy from the bestowal of it, and is inclined to do what he does from the prompting of his own will."[43] Seneca gives some examples: "Help one man with money, another with credit, another with influence, another with advice, another with sound precepts."[44] Van Unnik concludes that among Greeks and Romans, to do good is "to be useful," or "to do something agreeable to a person," who may be one's parents, friends, the state or nation.

Thirdly, van Unnik considers the Jewish view of good works. He refers to rabbinic teaching, which views good works as "works of charity," such as visiting the sick, hospitality towards strangers, aid to poor brides, assistance in marriage and funeral ceremonies, care for the dead, comfort for the distressed. Thus, good works in the Jewish sense are confined to certain classes of people, in particular the poor and the afflicted.

Having set out briefly the meaning of good works in early Christian thinking, in Graeco-Roman society, and in the Jewish writings, van Unnik examines the different passages in 1 Peter where doing good or good works occur. He concludes that the ethical demands in 1 Peter parallel the moral teaching of Graeco-Roman pagan philosophers. These ethical demands correspond to the highest standard of a decent man or woman in the ancient world. When Christians performed good deeds, van Unnik argues, pagans could see their good conduct and recognise it as good, for it met their moral standards.[45] However the Christians' basis and motivation for doing good were different from those of the Greeks. The foundation

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[41]Van Unnik, "The Teaching of Good Works in 1 Peter," 96. He cites from Chrysostom, *Hom. in Pent.* I.6, and from Cyril of Jerusalem, *Hom. Cat.* xv. 23.

[42]Van Unnik, "The Teaching of Good Works in 1 Peter," 96.

[43]Seneca, *Ben.* 1.6.1.

[44]Seneca, *Ben.* 1.2.4.

[45]W.C. van Unnik, "A Classical Parallel to 1 Peter ii.14 and 20," *NTS* 2(1955-56) 198-202.

for Christians was God's calling while the aim was to make the Gospel available to the pagans.[46]

While van Unnik is right in his conclusion that good works in 1 Peter correspond to the highest ethical demands of the Greco-Romans, his evidence is weak. His analysis of good works in 1 Peter against the Graeco-Roman background is brief and unsatisfactory.[47] With regard to the meaning of ἀγαθοποιεῖν in 2:14-15, he refers to the Graeco-Roman practice of honouring their public benefactors with tablets in the market place in tribute to the services they had rendered. However he does not substantiate this assertion with evidence from ancient writings or inscriptions.

His discussion of 2:18-25 makes only an oblique reference to the treatment of slaves in Graeco-Roman society, and does not deal with the important issue of how slaves could do good to their harsh masters. Concerning the conduct of Christian wives towards their non-Christian husbands, van Unnik asserts that "the standard of their way of living is formulated here in accordance with the ideals current in the ancient world." Again he leaves his claim unsubstantiated.

Moreover van Unnik has failed to highlight a crucial element in the Graeco-Roman understanding of doing good. Doing good was governed by certain social conventions of giving and receiving.[48] As we shall see shortly, this is important for our understanding of Peter's strategy of "good works" in response to hostility from non-Christians.

Furthermore van Unnik's choice of sources for drawing up his "brief" description of good works in early Christian, Greek and Jewish writings is highly selective, and gives an incomplete understanding of good works in these areas. For the Early Christian view, he does not consider any Christian writers earlier than the 4th century CE. For his description of the Jewish understanding of good works, he relies on rabbinical literature, and does not deal with writings from Hellenistic Judaism. He has also not examined good works in LXX and NT.

Despite the above weaknesses, Van Unnik is right to recognise the significant place of

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[46]Van Unnik, "The Teaching of Good Works in 1 Peter," 104.

[47]Van Unnik merely refers in a footnote to illustrative material from primary sources in H. Bolkestein, *Wohltätigkeit und Armenpflege im vorchristlichen Altertum* (Utrecht, 1939) 95ff., 297ff, without making any specific references or comment.

[48]See Peterman, *Paul's Gift from Philippi*, for an application of social conventions relating to giving and receiving in the ancient world to Phil. 4:10-20.

good works in 1 Peter. He sees good works as the "clue which leads to the heart of the writer's intention."[49] Van Unnik's main contribution lies in his conclusion that the concept of good works in 1 Peter is closest to the Graeco-Roman idea, and must be understood in the context of Graeco-Roman society.

However, "doing good" in 1 Peter still remains a subject which has been neglected by most Petrine scholars. Recent commentators acknowledge that doing good is an important theme in 1 Peter, but they do not expand on its meaning. Michaels sees doing good as doing God's will, but makes no attempt to elaborate.[50] Achtemeier concedes that doing good was a virtue acknowledged in Graeco-Roman culture, and that it means "simply comportment appropriate to what is good for the general welfare of one's fellow citizens."[51] This is a very general definition, and not very helpful for our understanding of "good works" in 1 Peter. Winter's work on doing good is limited to 2:14-15 only, and does not shed light on the meaning of good works in the rest of the letter.[52]

I agree with van Unnik's conclusion that the standard of good works which Peter had in mind was that of the highest standard of a decent man or woman in the Graeco-Roman world. But I will adduce further evidence to strengthen this claim. I will examine the meaning of ἀγαθοποιεῖν and associated words for good works used in 1 Peter (τῶν καλῶν ἔργων and τὸ ἀγαθὸν) in the LXX and Jewish writings, the early Christian writings, and the classical Greek and Hellenistic writings. This will give us a more complete view of good works. It will also confirm van Unnik's conclusion that Peter's use of good works in 1 Peter is closest to the Graeco-Roman understanding of good works. This will form the subject matter for the remaining part of this chapter.

c) "Good Works" in other Ancient Writings

In this section we shall consider the use of ἀγαθοποιεῖν, ἔργον ἀγαθόν and ἔργον καλόν in Jewish works, Early Christian writings, and Greco-Roman literature.

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[49]Van Unnik, "The Teaching of Good Works in 1 Peter," 84.

[50]Michaels, 126, 142.

[51]Achtemeier, 197.

[52]Winter, *Welfare of the City*, 26-40.

i) Jewish Writings

In the LXX the God of Israel is seen as good, and he is the one who does good (ἀγαθοποιεῖν).[53] καλός in LXX particularly describes what is right and good in the sight of the Lord.[54] When one does good, one is obeying God's Law. Doing good includes the way an Israelite relates to God, and the manner in which he worships God. When he fears God alone and does not follow other gods, he is doing good in the sight of the Lord.

Doing good also includes the way an Israelite relates to others in society, in particular to those who are needy. In Isaiah 1:17, doing good refers to seeking justice, encouraging the oppressed, and defending the cause of the fatherless and the widow.[55]

καλὸν ποιεῖν is often used for doing good, as opposed to doing harm. God's people are admonished to turn away from their evil deeds, and to learn to do good (καλόν).[56] A similar meaning is given to ἀγαθόν. Those who do God's will by obeying the Law are those who do good (ἀγαθόν),[57] and they will receive God's blessing. Thus doing good and good works in LXX reflect an attitude towards God, as doing good means complying with God's Law. Good works were also directed towards the needy and the oppressed.

In Rabbinic writings, good works are closely linked to the Torah.[58] One begins doing good as early as possible, and continues till death.[59] Good works and almsgiving outweigh all other commandments in the Torah.[60] But good works are different from almsgiving. The former can benefit the living and the dead, the rich and the poor, and help a poor person's finances as well as his physical needs. But almsgiving is more restricted, given only to the poor to help his finances, and can only help the living.

Although good works can be done for the rich and the poor, good works in Rabbinic

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[53]See Nu. 10:32; Judg. 17:13; Zp. 1:12; 2 Mac. 1:2.

[54]Deut. 6:18; 12:28.

[55]See also Isa. 58:6-7, where it refers to the freeing of prisoners, the feeding of the hungry, the reception of homeless and the clothing of the naked.

[56]Is. 1:17; Jer. 18:11.

[57]Ps. 34:14f; 37:27; 2 Ch.19:11.

[58]*Shabbath* 299. For a discussion of the relationship between the Torah and good works, see E.E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (2nd ed.; Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1979) 608-610.

[59]*Shabbath* 132

[60]*Tosephta Pea* 4.19.

writings refer mainly to works of charity to the poor and needy. These include feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, looking after orphans and widows, visiting the sick, giving hospitality to strangers, helping at weddings and accompanying the brides, comforting the mourners and helping out at funerals, burying the dead, and consoling the distressed. Doing good is aimed at sectors of the community who were impoverished and needed help.

Doing good brings its own rewards. Together with repentance, good deeds are "man's advocates," saving him from punishment. He enjoys its fruits in this world, and also in the world to come. Good deeds also ensure that he will enter the gates of the Lord. The one who does good looks to God for his reward. He does not expect anything from his beneficiaries. For this reason, good works done towards the dead are considered the highest form of benevolence because the dead cannot repay him for his good deeds.

In Hellenistic Judaism, God is viewed as good (ἀγαθός).[61] Faith in God is the infallible good.[62] God is the source of all good (πᾶντα ἀγαθοποιεῖν).[63] *Tobit* 12:7-9 gives us some idea of a Hellenistic Jewish understanding of good works. In 12:7 doing good (τὸ ἀγαθὸν ποιεῖτε) will ward off evil. Good works include prayer with sincerity, and almsgiving (12:8-9).[64] Earlier on in the book when Tobit charges his son on his mission, he exhorts him to give bread to the hungry and his garments to the naked, and to give alms (4:16). Doing good (ἀγαθοποιεῖν) is used in *Tobit* 12:13B in the context of ~~raising~~ burying the dead and healing the sick.

Doing good is also the appropriate response in the face of hostility. In *Testament of Joseph* 18:2 we read: "If anyone wishes to do you harm, you should pray for him, along with doing good, and you will be rescued by the Lord from every evil."[65] There is nothing in the context to elucidate the meaning of good works. What is emphasised is the promise of deliverance from evil by God.[66]

The above survey of the use of ἀγαθοποιεῖν, ἔργον ἀγαθόν and ἔργον καλόν in ancient

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[61]Philo, *L.A.* 1.47; *Gig.* 45; *Som.* 1.149.

[62]Philo, *Abr.* 268.

[63]*Epistle of Aristeas* 242.

[64]For almsgiving, see also *Tobit* 4:7-11.

[65]See also *Testament of Benjamin* 4:3

[66]*Testament of Joseph* 1:4ff.; 18:2b. See also *Testament of Benjamin* 5:12.

Jewish writings portrays God as one who does good, and who requires his people to do likewise. Doing good refers to one's attitude and practice of worship towards God, and one's acts of compassion for the needy in the community. It is also the appropriate response towards those who plan and do evil. Those who do good will receive their reward from God, for God is the one who delivers his people from evil.

ii) Early Christian writings

With regard to the meaning of doing good and good works in early Christian writings, we will consider works dating from the second century CE. This will give a more complete picture of good works in the Early Church. As noted above, Van Unnik relied on the works of Chrysostom and Cyril of Jerusalem, both from 4th century CE, to support his view that good works are "deeds of humiliation," aimed at doing away with post-baptismal sins.[67]

In early Christian writings the aim of good works is not solely to do away with post-baptismal sins, as van Unnik claims, although the issue of post-baptismal sins arose earlier than the 4th century CE, as shown by the the writings of Hermas in the second century CE.[68] *Mandate* 8.7-10 lists the good works which Christians must do in order to be saved. They must refrain from evil deeds (8.3-6). Good works (τῶν ἀγαθῶν τὰ ἔργα) are "first of all, faith, fear of God, love and harmony, words of righteousness, truth, patience."[69] Good works also include:

> to minister to widows, to look after orphans and the destitute, to redeem from distress the servants of God, to be hospitable, for in hospitality may be found the practice of good (ἀγαθοποίησις)], to resist none, to be gentle, to be poorer than all men, to reverence the aged, to practise justice, to preserve the brotherhood, to submit to insult, to be brave, to bear no malice, to comfort those who are oppressed in spirit, not to cast aside those who are offended in the faith, but to convert them and give them courage, to reprove sinners, not to oppress poor debtors, and whatever is like to these things.

Good works here include one's attitude towards God, good conduct towards other members of the Christian community, and help for the poor and oppressed.

There are other Early Christian writings which do not consider good works in the context

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[67]Van Unnik, "The Teaching of Good Works in 1 Peter," 87.

[68]K.W. Clark, "The Sins of Hermas" in H.R. Willoughby (ed.), *Early Christian Origins* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961) 102-119. Clark is of the view that the problem of post-baptismal sin was new and unique at the time of the writing of Hermas.

[69]*The Apostolic Fathers*, translation by K. Lake.

of post-baptismal sins. According to 2 Clement (probably to be dated between 120 and 170 CE), doing good (ἀγαθοποιεῖν) is doing the will of God the Father (10:1-2). Similarly, Clement's *Stromata* (late second century CE), argues that, as God is good, those who follow him must do good to all according to the image of God.[70] Another example of good works is almsgiving.[71] Good works are directed to all, and not limited to members of the Christian community. In doing good, one enjoys a good relationship with God. The end result of doing good (ἀγαθοποιεῖν) is peace from God and glory.[72]

Doing good as part of Christian life features in *The Epistle of Diognetus*.[73] Chapter 5 contains a description of the life of Christians. Christians dwell in both Greek and non-Greek cities, and wherever they are, they take part in everything as citizens (5.4,5). They can not be distinguished from other men by country, language or custom in dress and food and other matters of living, yet "they show forth the remarkable and admittedly strange order of their own citizenship" (5.1,4). While Christians live as aliens (ὡς πάροικοι) in the land (5.5), they do good (ἀγαθοποιοῦντες: 5.16). They obey the laws of the land (5.10). They show love to all, even to those who hate them (5.11; 6.6). In return, they are treated as evil-doers, persecuted and reviled by those to whom they have done good (5.10-17). Christians are also exhorted to do good to benefit (εὐεργετεῖν) those poorer than them (10.6).

The above survey shows that good works in Early Christian writings cover a wide range of deeds, and are not limited to those acts which have a redemptive value for post-baptismal sins. Doing good means doing the will of God the Father. It includes good works done to Christians and to non-Christians. In particular, good works are done for the benefit of the needy. In this connection, various Early Christian writers encourage almsgiving.

iii) Graeco-Roman Writings

In Graeco-Roman writings, doing good and good works do not have the primary religious connotations which characterise Jewish or Early Christian writings. In Jewish or Early

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[70]*Stromata* 4.18.

[71]2 Clem. 16:4.

[72]2 Clem. 10:2; 1 Clem. 2:2; Hermas, *Similitude* 5.3.

[73]For issues relating to the authorship and date of the epistle, see H.G. Meecham, *The Epistle to Diognetus* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1949) 16-19. There is uncertainty about the date, with some scholars opting for a date in the second century CE.

Christian writings, doing good means obeying the Law of God or doing the will of God the Father. However this does not mean that the Greco-Romans did not recognise the gods as good or that the gods did good.[74] But the terminology of good, doing good and good works in the ancient world is generally set in the context of a humanistic view of life.

To be reckoned a good man (ὁ ἀγαθός ~~or ὁ καγαθός~~) was a commendation sought after in the ancient world. Such a man was esteemed in society because he contributed his wealth for the benefit of the community. This implies the possession of wealth by the good man.

Earlier we looked at Xenophon's account of Socrates' meeting with Ischomachus, and noted how Isomachus is said to have attributed his reputation as a good man to his use of "wealth increased by honest means"[75] in adorning the city and helping friends. These were considered to be honourable acts.[76] Ischomachus was also judged a good man by how he managed his household and estate, and how he treated his wife and trained her to manage the household and the servants.

It appears from this that only the rich could do good, for they alone would have the means to help their friends in need, and to adorn the city.[77] The idea that a good man was also a public benefactor is reinforced in Dio's thirty-first discourse.[78] In his discourse to the people of Rhodes who had developed the practice of "switching inscriptions" on statues, i.e., by removing inscriptions on an existing statue and engraving the name of a new benefactor on it,[79] Dio uses words denoting good men and benefactors interchangeably. He criticises the Rhodians for their treatment of "your benefactors (εὐεργέτας) and of the honours given to your good men (τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἀνδρῶν)" (31.8). In 31.14, he said, "But to commit an outrage against good men (ἄνδρας ἀγαθοὺς) who have been the benefactors (εὐεργέτας) of the state, to annul the honours given them and to blot out their remembrance, I for my part do not see how that would be otherwise termed."

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[74]Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 70-71; Plutarch, *De Is. et Os.* 368A,B; Diogenes Laertius, 3.72.

[75]Xenophon, *Oec.* 11.8.

[76]See also Diogenes Laertius, 3.99 on Plato: "A man has a good reputation when he is well spoken of. A man has ample means when he is so equipped for the needs of life that he can afford to benefit his friends and discharge his public services (εὖ ποιῆσαι) with lavish display. If a man has all these things, he is completely happy."

[77]Xenophon, *Oec.* 11.9-11.

[78]Probably during the reign of Titus (79-81 CE).

[79]Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 31.9.

The same interchange of words is seen in 31.27:

> The one act, namely, means being ungrateful to your benefactors (εὐεργετάις), but the other means insulting them; the one is a case of not honouring the good men (ἀγαθοὺς ἄνδρας), the other, of dishonouring them.

Again in 31.65:

> How very much worse it is to rob good men (τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς) of honours bestowed, than to rob anybody else, and to injure your benefactors (τοὺς εὐεργέτας) than to injure any chance person, is something that nobody fails to see.

However there is evidence from other Graeco-Roman writings that doing good was not limited to public benefactions alone. Diogenes Laertius writing on Zeno (333~261 BCE) defined good (ἀγαθόν) as "that from which some advantage comes, and more particularly what is either identical with or not distinct from benefit."[80] There were three senses to the meaning of good: it could be the source from which benefits arose, it could be the act from which benefits resulted, and it could refer to the agency by which the benefit resulted.

The wider definition of doing good is evident in Seneca's treatise on *Benefits*, which was written between 56 and 62 CE.[81] Seneca saw the need for a discussion on benefits and the rules that governed benefits, for he considered that benefits "constitute the chief bond of human society" (1.4.2). People needed to be

> taught to give willingly, to receive willingly, to return willingly, and to set before us the high aim of striving, not merely to equal, but to surpass in deed and spirit those who have placed us under obligation.[82]

As van Unnik has noted, Seneca's definition of a benefit is an

> act of well-wisher who bestows joy and derives joy from the bestowal of it, and is inclined to do what he does from the prompting of his own will. A benefit is undoubtedly a good, while what is done or given is neither a good nor an evil.[83]

Another phrase used for giving benefits is "the opportunity of being useful" (1.7.1). A benefit is "the contribution of something useful" (5.10.1). In other words, to confer a benefit was to do good to someone (5.10.3; 5.12.3-4).

According to Seneca, the range of benefits that one can bestow is very wide. Basically,

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[80]Diogenes Laertius, 7.94.

[81]See Peterman, *Paul's Gift from Philippi*, chp. 3.

[82]Seneca, *Ben.* 1.4.2.

[83]Seneca, *Ben.* 1.6.1. When a man bestows a benefit, he aims to be of service and to give pleasure to the one to whom he gives (2.31.2).

there are three categories of benefits, *viz*., what is necessary, what is useful, and what is pleasurable, in descending order of priority (1.11.1). Benefits that are necessary are those without which one would not be able to live. They include rescue from life-threatening situations, such as being snatched from the hands of the enemy, or from the anger of a tyrant, or from proscription, or from similar perils. Deeds that preserve liberty, chastity and a good conscience are also grouped under necessary benefits.

The range of useful benefits is also wide and varied. Examples are giving money for a reasonable standard of living, public office and advancement for those striving for higher positions. All other benefits falling outside these two categories are pleasurable benefits. These are benefits that bring pleasure to the recipient, but which will not reproach him with his weakness.

The broad and varied extent of benefits or good deeds can be illustrated by the following examples given by Seneca: helping someone with money, paying for someones else's debt, giving land in order that by its fertility ~~that~~ the price of grain may be lowered, giving a loaf of bread in a time of famine, pointing out a spring of water to a thirsty man, giving useful advice and sound precept, helping someone with influence, protecting someone's reputation, preserving his life and liberty, attending to one who is sick, defending someone when he is on trial for his life.[84]

The act of doing good need not be big. It also need not cost a great deal of money. According to Seneca, the important thing is not the size of the benefits, but the character of the one from whom they come (1.9.1). Therefore one need not be rich to do good. Even slaves can bestow benefits upon their masters (3.18-28),[85] and children can bestow benefits upon their parents (3.29-38).

The conferring of benefits by one person upon another places an obligation on the beneficiary to return the benefit.[86] According to Seneca, "the giving of a benefit is a social act,

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[84]Seneca, *Ben*. 1.2.4-5; 2.35.3; 3.8.2-3; 3.9.2-3.

[85]See chapter 6 below.

[86]This reciprocal giving and receiving is not unique to Graeco-Roman society. Marcel Mauss, an anthropologist, shows that such social conventions exist in primitive societies: *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (ET; London: Routledge, 1969).

it wins the goodwill of someone, it lays someone under obligation" (5.11.5).[87] This social convention existed in Xenophon's time (4th century BCE), as is clear from his statement that "everybody believes he ought to show good-will to the man from whom he receives gifts."[88] Cicero (106-43 BCE) wrote that no duty was more crucial than returning gratitude.[89] The same practice is also evident from Dio's writings (40-120 CE), where he declares that ingratitude towards benefactors is a serious offence.[90]

In Seneca's view, the obligation to return the benefit exists even when one has received it from an objectionable or hateful person (2.18.3; 3.12.3). To give and to return a benefit are honourable and commendable acts (5.12.3-4). But failure to conform to this social obligation of returning benefits is looked upon "as a disgrace, and the whole world counts it as such" (3.1.1). Ingratitude is to be avoided because it disrupts the harmony of the human race (4.18.1).

However disgraceful ingratitude might be, Seneca urges persistence and perseverance in giving benefits to the ungrateful. Those who do so are imitating their gods, who give benefit to those who do not know them, and to those who are ungrateful (4.26.1; 7.31.3-5). Such persistence will pay off, for

> persistent goodness wins over bad men, and no one of them is so hard-hearted and hostile to kindly treatment as not to love a good man even while they wrong him, when even the fact that they can fail to pay with impunity is made an additional source of indebtedness to him.[91]

The conferring of benefits or good works was held to be especially pertinent to one's response towards one's enemies in Graeco-Roman society. In answer to the question, "How shall I defend myself against my enemy?", Plutarch replied:

> By proving yourself good and honourable. What, think you, would be their state of mind if you were to show yourself to be an honest, sensible man and a useful citizen, of high

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[87]See also S.C. Mott, "The Power of Giving and Receiving: Reciprocity in Hellenistic Benevolence", in G.F. Hawthorne (ed.), *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 60-72; Peterman, *Paul's Gift from Philippi*, 53-55.

[88]Xenophon, *An.* 7.7.46.

[89]Cicero, *Off.* I.47-49.

[90]Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 31.25, 27, 29, 37.

[91]Seneca, *Ben.* 7.31.1. See also 1.2.4-5: "No matter what the issue of former benefits has been, still persist in conferring them upon others; this will be better even if they fall unheeded into the hands of the ungrateful ... Even wild beasts are sensible to good offices, and no creature is so savage that it will not be softened by kindness and made to love the hand that gives it."

> repute in speech, clean in actions, orderly in living, outdo your enemies in diligence, goodness, magnanimity, kindly deeds and good works? These are the things which, as Demosthenes puts it "retard the tongue, stop the mouth, constrict the throat, and leave one with nothing to say."[92]

The above survey shows that in the Graeco-Roman world, the bestowal of a benefit or doing good and the reciprocal act of returning the benefit were fundamental in their social life. To help another person and to be of service was both noble and chivalrous (Seneca, *Ben.* 3.15.4). This placed a social obligation on the beneficiary to return the benefit. To continue to do good even when the beneficiary remained ungrateful was proof of a fine spirit in a person (Seneca, *Ben.* 7.32.2). Good works or benefits were of a wide and varied range in the ancient world. Its recipients were not limited to a particular group, like the poor and the oppressed. Anyone could be the beneficiary of good works, just as anyone could do good.

4) "Doing Good" and "Good Works" in 1 Peter

In the light of the above analysis of good works in Jewish literature, Early Christian works, and Greco-Roman writings, we now return to the question, "What kind of good works did Peter have in mind when he exhorted his addressees to do good to non-Christians in a hostile situation?"

We will first consider the characteristics of good works in 1 Peter. We noted above that an important characteristic is that good works can be observed by onlookers who can judge the deeds as good.[93] Peter's use of ἐποπτεύω in 2:12 and 3:2 suggests strongly that he is aware that non-Christians watch the conduct of Christians, and judge them by their own standard of good works.

Another characteristic of good works in 1 Peter is that the beneficiaries are not from the poor and oppressed class. They are non-Christian governing authorities, masters, husbands and friends. The exhortation to do good is directed to the subordinate members: Christian citizens (2:13-17), Christian slaves (2:18-20), and Christian wives (3:1-6).

A further point about the beneficiaries of good works is that they are the source of hostility against Christians. It is in response to this hostility from non-Christians that Peter

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[92]Plutarch, *Mor.* 88B, citing Demosthenes, *Or.* 19.208.

[93]See pp. 91-94.

urges good works.[94] Like Plutarch, Peter exhorts his readers to respond to hostility by conducting themselves as good citizens, good slaves, good wives and good friends.

A final aspect of good works in 1 Peter is the expectation that doing good will evoke some reciprocal response from the beneficiaries. In 3:13 Peter asks a rhetorical question: "Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?" The answer is: surely no one! By doing good, Peter hopes that Christians will induce non-Christians to change their minds about Christians and their God. In 2:15 he expects that good works will silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.[95] In 2:19-20 the good works of Christian slaves will be commended. In 3:1-6 the good behaviour of Christian wives will find favour with their husbands and perhaps win them over to the gospel.

Notwithstanding this expectation of reciprocity of good works from the beneficiaries, Peter is sufficiently realistic enough to realise that this will not always happen. He also counsels his addressees to be prepared to suffer for doing good (2:20; 3:14,17). Non-Christians who do not reciprocate with good but continue to speak maliciously of the good works of Christians will be ashamed of their own malevolence (3:16). Even when they suffer, Christians must continue to do good (4:19).

Although the concept of good works appears in Jewish and early Christian writings, the characteristics of good works in 1 Peter do not correspond closely with them. Good works in 1 Peter come closest to the concept of good works in Graeco-Roman writings. Parallels between the two can be seen in the overall concept of good works and in the wide range of intended beneficiaries. Graeco-Roman people recognised that doing good was an honourable and commendable act. When one had done good, there was basically an obligation on the beneficiary to return the benefit. Failure to reciprocate brought disgrace upon the ungrateful beneficiary. But this failure need not deter the benefactor from continuing to do good towards the ungrateful recipient.

Peter's awareness of the social convention of benefits is reflected in his hope that the good deeds of Christians would bring about a reciprocal response from non-Christians, and his anticipation that their good works will change the non-Christian view of Christians and their God (2:12, 19-20; 3:1-2).

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[94]See pp. 82-84.

[95]C.f. Plutarch, *Mor.* 88B.

But like Seneca, Peter is also aware that there were people who fail to return a benefit. Peter encourages Christians to continue to do good to such people, even when they have to suffer for it (3:16; 4:19).

The range of intended beneficiaries in the Graeco-Roman concept of good works was much wider than in Jewish and early Christian writings. They were not confined primarily to the poor and the needy of the community, as in Jewish and early Christian writings. Anyone could be a beneficiary, even the master of the slave. Anyone could be a benefactor, even a slave or a wife, so long as he or she had the capacity to do an act which benefitted another.

The rabbinic view of good works does not come close to the concept of good works in 1 Peter. It is primarily concerned with complying with the Torah. Although good works could be done for both the rich and the poor, they were directed mainly towards the poor and the oppressed. On the other hand, in 1 Peter the beneficiaries include those who are rich and in authority. Moreover the one who did good according to rabbinic teaching looked to God for his rewards. There was no expectation of any reciprocal acts from his beneficiaries, as in 1 Peter.

With regard to good works in Hellenistic Judaism and in 1 Peter, Goppelt is of the view that 1 Peter has developed the concept of ἀγαθοποιεῖν from "the unspecialized use of the word in Hellenistic Judaism" by modifying the Jewish and early Christian view in order to address Hellenistic peoples.[96] He does not elaborate on this, but cites in a footnote various references in which ἀγαθοποιεῖν is used in different contexts.

Two of the references cited by Goppelt pertain to good works as the appropriate response in the face of hostility:[97] doing good will conquer evil, for the good man will find protection and deliverance from God. This finds a close parallel in 3:9-12, but good works in 1 Peter do not always end in triumph. Peter recognises that Christians could suffer for doing good (3:14,17; 4:19).

The view of good works found in Early Christian writings also does not correspond closely to that in 1 Peter. In 1 Peter doing good has nothing to do with post-baptismal sins. Good works in early Christian writings are directed to both Christians and non-Christians, a scope wider than that envisaged in 1 Peter. There are some echoes of 1 Peter in *The Epistle*

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[96]Goppelt, 177-178.

[97]*Testament of Benjamin* 5:2; *Testament of Joseph* 18:2.

of Diognetus. Christians were ὡς πάροικοι, as in 1 Peter. While Christians live as aliens (ὡς πάροικοι) in the land,[98] they do good (ἀγαθοποιοῦντες).[99] In this context, doing good includes obeying the law of the land, showing love to everyone, even to those who persecuted Christians, and helping those poorer than them.

The above shows that good works in 1 Peter correspond most closely with the Graeco-Roman concept of good works in terms of their external characteristics. Pagan observers could see and judge these works as good. However there was an important distinction. The aim of doing good in 1 Peter is not to gain δόξα or glory and the reputation of a good man or a good wife or a good slave for its own sake. Doing good is the means by which Christians can relate socially with non-Christians, and through their good deeds, they hope to change the opinions of non-Christians concerning their God and their new way of life.

5) Summary

Good works is a predominant theme in 1 Peter, used only in the context of social relationships between Christians and non-Christians, which are portrayed as hostile. Peter exhorts Christians not to withdraw totally from their social relationships with non-Christians in order to avoid hostility. Rather they must remain in these relationships and do good in response to the abuse hurled at them by their non-Christian husbands, masters, friends, and neighbours.

The good works which Peter advocates are those which can be seen and judged by society as good. The standard envisaged is that of the highest standard of a man or woman in Graeco-Roman society. The expectation is that non-Christian beneficiaries will reciprocate and respond positively to Christians. However Peter concedes that this will not always be the case, and urges Christians to be willing to suffer for doing good. Even when they suffer, they must continue to do good.

In the next four chapters, I will discuss good works in 2:13-3:12, setting each relationship against its Graeco-Roman background. This has a two-fold purpose. First, it will offer further confirmation of our observation that the view of good works in 1 Peter parallels that in the ancient Graeco-Roman world. Secondly, it will demonstrate in a vivid way the intensity of the dilemma which Christians faced in their social relationships with non-Christians. It is in the

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[98]Diognetus, 5.5.

[99]Diognetus, 5.16.

light of this dilemma that Peter advocates good works towards non-Christians.

CHAPTER 5

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND NON-CHRISTIAN GOVERNING AUTHORITIES (2:13-17)

2:13-17 deals with relationships which Christians in Asia Minor had with non-Christians in their civic life. Most commentators examine this passage with a view to determining what Peter had to say about the relationship between church and state, or the Christian's duty towards governing authorities.[1] Others, like Michaels, regard the basic question in 2:13-17 as the same as in 2:12; i.e., "how should Christians respond to their enemies or false accusers?"[2] In other words, these verses are assumed to concern the Christian's relationship to his fellow citizens.

A careful reading of the text however, shows that Peter is concerned with *both* sets of relationships, that is, the relationship between Christians and non-Christian governing authorities, and the relationship between Christians and their non-Christian fellow citizens, in particular those who have falsely accused them (2:15).

In 2:13-14, Peter states the function of governing authorities, which is to punish evildoers and to praise those who do good. He enjoins Christians to submit to these governing authorities. This is reiterated in 2:17; Christians must honour the emperor. But in between these verses, Peter turns to deal with the relationship between Christians and their non-Christian fellow citizens. He refers to "the ignorant talk of foolish men" (2:15b), which will be silenced by their good works (2:15). Christians must also conduct themselves as free men, but at the same time they are also slaves of God (2:16). Then in 2:17 he encourages Christians to respect their non-Christian fellow citizens, including those "foolish men" who have abused them by their "ignorant talk".

Thus, we see that in 2:13-17, Peter is concerned *both* with the relationship between Christians and non-Christian ruling authorities, and their relationship with non-Christian fellow citizens. In this chapter I shall examine these two sets of relationships, and their links with each other. I shall consider these relationships against their social historical background. I shall

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[1]See, e.g., Best, 112; Marshall, 83; Davids, 98.

[2]Michaels, 123.

first examine the non-Christian governing authorities in Asia Minor; secondly, the effect of conversion on a person's relationship with the ruling authorities, and on his relationship with his non-Christian neighbour. Finally I shall consider Peter's response to these issues.

1) Non-Christian Governing Authorities in Asia Minor

In 2:13-14 the governing authorities referred to are the emperor and the governors whom he has sent to govern on his behalf. The word βασιλεῦς in 2:13 refers to the emperor in Rome. The emperor was the head of political power and the guarantor of peace in the empire.[3] Thus the well-being of the emperor was held to be very important for the welfare of people in the empire.

However the emperor in Rome was far too distant for the people of Asia Minor to relate to. No emperor made any visit to Asia Minor in the whole of the first century CE.[4] For more direct rule in the provinces, the emperor appointed governors or provincial magistrates, variously named legates, procurators or proconsuls. They were his representatives commissioned to administer the provinces on his behalf. When Pliny was appointed governor of Bithynia in 111 CE, the emperor Trajan wrote to him, "The people of that province will understand that I have their interests at heart. For you will take care to make it clear to them, that you were appointed specially to represent myself."[5]

The five eastern provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia to which 1 Peter was directed, were administered by Roman governors. As noted earlier in Chapter 1, these provinces had gradually come under Roman rule since 133/31 BCE.[6] Attalos III of Pergamum willed Asia to the Romans in 133 BCE. It finally became a province in 126 BCE, but it was Octavian (who later took the name of Augustus) who reorganised it in 29 BCE.[7] Bithynia and Pontus were united as a single provincial unit since 65/63 BCE. The province of Galatia was created in 25 BCE when the Roman empire annexed the possessions of

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[3]K. Wengst, *Pax Romana and the Peace of Jesus Christ* (ET: London: SCM Press, 1987) 46-47.

[4]Price, *Rituals and Power*, 1.

[5]Pliny, *Ep.* 10.18.

[6]See C.J. Hemer, "Asia Minor," *ISBE* I.325-327.

[7]S.J. Friesen, *Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993) 3.

Amyntas.[8] Cappadocia was the last of these provinces to be colonised in 17 CE.

In 1 Peter 2:13-14 governors are those appointed by the emperor to punish those who do evil and praise those who do good. While this dual function here describes the rôle of the governors, evidence from ancient literary sources shows that this description encapsulates the role of all ruling authorities in Graeco-Roman society.[9] It was one of the virtues of the king, the supreme authority in the empire.[10] It was also the general description for the task of those in authority, for example, generals, teachers, fathers.[11] Thus, the twofold function of punishing evildoers and praising those who do good applies to both the emperor and to the provincial governors.

The relationships between the emperor, the governors and the subjects are well depicted by Aelius Aristides.[12] Although he wrote in the second century CE, Aristides' description would apply a century earlier. The governors who had been sent to administer cities and provinces were rulers of these areas in their own right, but in their relation to each other, they were all subjects of the emperor. With regard to the people, the governors offered the leading example of how subjects should behave. This would include their attitude and conduct towards the emperor.

Aristides describes the subordinate attitude of the governors towards the emperor in this way:

> None is so self-confident that he can so much as hear the name without being affected. No, he rises, sings his praise, offers homage and joins in a twofold prayer, one on the Emperor's behalf to the gods, one to the Emperor himself concerning his own affairs.[13]

All subjects expressed their homage to the emperor through their prayers on behalf of the emperor, and their prayers to the emperor himself.

Prayers were offered annually by the subjects for the health and prosperity of the emperor.

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[8]Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I.61.

[9]W.C. van Unnik, "Lob und Strafe durch die Obrigkeit Hellenistisches zu Röm.13.3-4", in E.E. Ellis and E. Grasser (eds.), *Jesus und Paulus: Festschrift für Werner Georg Kümmel zum 70 Gerburtstag* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975) 336-340.

[10]Diodorus Siculus, 1.70.6; 5.71.1.

[11]Xenophon, *Cyr.* 1.6.20 cited in van Unnik, "Lob und Strafe,".

[12]Aristides, *Or.* 26.

[13]I owe the reference and translation to B. Levick, *The Government of the Roman Empire: A Sourcebook* (London: Croom Helm, 1985) 116-117.

A typical prayer for the health and prosperity for the emperor can be seen in Pliny's letter to the emperor Trajan: "And we sincerely implored the gods to preserve you in health and prosperity, as it is upon your welfare that the security and repose of mankind depend."[14] In Tacitus' account of Nero's indictment against Thrasea, one of the charges was his failure to take the national oath, which comprised vows for the life of the emperor.[15]

2) The Imperial Cult: An Essential Background to 2:13-17

Prayer for and to the emperor was a basic expression of the imperial cult in the Roman Empire, which must form the backdrop of any discussion of 2:13-17. The imperial cult played an important part in the lives of people, dominating their relationship with governing authorities and with their fellow citizens, as we will see below.

In their discussion of 2:13-17, most scholars have ignored the significant effect of the imperial cult in the lives of the people and its relevance to the issue of social relationships between Christians and non-Christians in this passage. For instance, Winter's study of the meaning of doing good in 2:13-14 makes no mention of the relevance of the imperial cult to this issue, although it is clear that he is adopting a socio-historical approach.[16] He refers only to the Graeco-Roman practice of public benefactions.[17] It is also clear that Winter is aware of the significance of the imperial cult in Graeco-Roman society, for he sets his study of civic obligations of Christians in Galatians 6:11-18 in the context of the imperial cult. He writes, "The central place of the imperial cult in *politeia* created an enormous problem for early Christians because they were part of *politeia*."[18] The imperial cult also created problems for Christians in Asia Minor, and it is difficult to see why Winter omits this crucial factor in his discussion of 2:13-14, which refers directly to the relationship between Christians and their governing authorities.

Achtemeier is one scholar who appreciates the importance of the imperial cult in 2:13-

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[14]See Pliny, *Ep.* 10.52; see also 10.35,100.

[15]Tacitus, *Ann.* 16.21,28.

[16]Winter, *Welfare of the City*. For a more detailed discussion, see pp. 130-138 below.

[17]Winter, *Welfare of the City*, 26-40.

[18]Winter, *Welfare of the City*, 124.

17.[19] He argues that the imperial cult provided a way for the people of Asia Minor to relate to the emperor in a way that was consistent with their ancient Greek culture.[20] It fitted their cultural framework for subjugation in the form of cultic reverence for the gods. Consequently,

> a challenge to the emperor cult in those provinces was not only a challenge to Roman rule, it was a challenge to the social fabric itself, and constituted a threat to unravel the cultural continuity such cultic activity provided.[21]

However Achtemeier has not shown clearly how the refusal by Christians to submit to imperial worship threatened the social fabric of society. It is my intention to do so in this chapter.

Various views have been put forward regarding the nature of the relationship between the emperor and his subjects embodied in the imperial cult. Nock sees it as the means by which subjects could express their homage and loyalty to the emperor.[22] Lohse suggests a more pragmatic view, that the imperial cult served primarily political aims, for "the worship of the ruler was primarily a sign of political submission, expressed in cultic form."[23]

Mitchell's recent and detailed study of the imperial cult in Asia Minor argues that its practice was more than just a way of capturing and channelling the loyalty of the people and of ensuring stability of the empire. The imperial cult, according to Mitchell, had brought about radical changes in the lives of the people:

> Without the imperial cult there might have been little substance to civic life over much of the empire; and the cities themselves, the bed-rock of the empire, could hardly have flourished as they did. This was the most critical contribution that emperor worship made to provincial life.[24]

Mitchell seems correct in his view that the imperial cult played a crucial part in the lives of the people of Asia Minor in the first century CE. The imperial cult was a fundamental means by which the people, individually and corporately, could relate to the emperor in expressing their

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[19]Achtemeier's commentary was published after my first draft of this chapter. It is heartening to see that he holds a similar view.

[20]Achtemeier, 27-28.

[21]Achtemeier, 28.

[22]A.D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933) 229.

[23]E. Lohse, *The New Testament Environment* (ET; London: SCM Press, 1976) 220.

[24]Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I.117. In *Rituals and Powers*, Price argues that through the practice of the imperial cult in their communities, the people were made aware of the imperial power, and were able to come to terms with this power within the framework of their communities.

loyalty to him.[25] It also affected other areas of their lives. The architecture and orientation of their civic centres were influenced by emperor worship.[26] Their communal activities were affected by various imperial festivals.[27]

Temples were erected and dedicated to the honour of the emperors, and prayers and sacrifices were offered by the people. Priests were installed in these temples. Imperial festivals were frequently held, in which events were organised to honour the emperor. For people in the provinces who were too far away from the emperor in Rome, participation in the imperial cult was the only way in which they could relate to him.

The imperial cult exerted such a pervasive influence in the lives of the people, both corporately and individually, that we cannot ignore its reality and relevance when we discuss the issue of the relationship between Christians and non-Christian governing authorities, and their non-Christian fellow citizens. It is my contention that only when 2:13-17 is examined against the background of the imperial cult in Asia Minor can we grasp more fully the dilemma faced by Christians in this area of their lives, and understand more clearly Peter's injunction to Christians in this passage.

In setting the discussion of 2:13-17 against the social historical background of the imperial cult, I am not dealing with the issue of the imperial cult as the impetus for organised state persecution from Rome.[28] The earlier chapters of this thesis have established that the cause of persecution for Christians in Asia Minor was hostility from non-Christian members of family and society, and not direct abuse from the governing authorities. Rather I am concerned with the effect of the imperial cult on the life of people in Asia Minor, and the conflict which a Christian convert faced when "the overwhelming pressure to conform imposed by the institutions of his city, and the activities of his neighbours"[29] was brought to bear upon him.

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[25]When Pliny informed Trajan of his intention to build a temple to the emperor at his own expense, and sought his permission to adorn the temple with the emperor's statue, Trajan acceded to his request, adding that he did not wish to "check any instance of your loyalty towards me" (Pliny, *Ep.* 10.9).

[26]See Mitchell's description of the temples at Ancyra, Pessinus and Antioch in their relation to other structures in the cities: Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I.104-107; Price, *Rituals and Power*, 133-169.

[27]See pp. 120-123 below.

[28]G. Krodel, "Persecution and Toleration of Christianity until Hadrian", in S. Benko & J. J. O'Rourke (eds.), *Early Church History: The Roman Empire as the Setting of Primitive Christianity* (London: Oliphants, 1972) 255-267.

[29]Mitchell, *Anatolia*, II.10.

The imperial cult wielded such a pervasive influence on the lives of people in Asia Minor that rejection of it by Christians would inevitably have implications for their relationships with the governing authorities and their fellow citizens. In the next section I will show evidence of the presence of the imperial cult in many parts of Asia Minor.

3) Presence of the Imperial Cult in Asia Minor

The widespread presence of the imperial cult in the Roman Empire is attested by ancient writers. One of them, Dio Cassius (150-235 CE) wrote:

> This practice [of imperial cult], beginning under him [Augustus], has continued under other emperors, not only in the case of Hellenic nations but also in that of all the others, in so far as they are subject to the Romans.[30]

This section will trace the presence of the imperial cult in different parts of Asia Minor for a period lasting for almost three centuries from 29 BCE. Evidence of the imperial cult could be found in the numerous temples erected to honour the emperor. These temples were the centres of the imperial cult, and priests were appointed to serve in them.

Often the initiative for establishing the cult in Asia Minor came from the people themselves. It was at the request of the people of Asia and Bithynia around 29 BCE that Augustus allowed them to build sanctuaries in Ephesus and Nicaea respectively, which were dedicated to the cult of Roma and Julius Caesar. Here the Roman citizens could honour "these two divinities".[31] He also permitted them to set up cult centres in Pergamum and Nicomedia, where "the aliens, whom he styled Hellenes" could honour him.[32] Although the temple for Rome and Augustus in Pergamum has not been found, evidence of its existence can be found on various coins.[33] The cult continued here, and was still flourishing in the second century CE.[34]

Tacitus recorded another request from the city of Gythium/Gytheion in Laconia in 15 CE

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[30]Dio Cassius, 51.20.7.

[31]Dio Cassius, 51.20.6-7. The cult of Roma and Divus Julius did not become significant in the province of Asia: Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 11.

[32]Dio Cassius, 51.20.5-7. Tacitus recorded the request from Spain to follow the example of Asia by erecting a shrine to Tiberius and his mother: *Ann.* 4.37.

[33]Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 12-15. One set of coins issued in Asia between 20 and 18 BCE show three different images on the reverse side: a triumphal arch, a round temple of Mars, and a hexastyle temple.

[34]Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 15.

to erect a temple in honour of Tiberius and Livia.[35] Notwithstanding Tiberius' refusal, deputations from eleven cities of Asia were sent in 26 CE to plead with him for the honour of erecting a temple in honour to himself, Livia and the Senate. Again, this was at the initiative of the people of Asia who wished to express their loyalty to the emperor in Rome. This temple was subsequently built in Smyrna because of its many "good offices towards the Roman people."[36]

There is also evidence of the establishment of the imperial cult in Galatia soon after it was annexed to the Roman Empire.[37] The temple of Rome and Augustus at Ancyra was constructed during the reign of Augustus, and was probably dedicated sometime in 19 or 20 CE.[38] A second temple dedicated to the imperial cult in Galatia can be found in Pessinus. There was also an imperial temple at Pisidian Antioch.[39] The list of priests, dating from Tiberius' reign, found in Ancyra also attests to the presence of the imperial cult in Galatia.[40]

The imperial cult also spread to rural areas. By 3 BCE Paphlagonia, in the northern part of Galatia which had been annexed to Galatia only three years previously, administered the oath of loyalty to Augustus and his family:

> I swear by Zeus, Earth, Sun, all the gods [and] goddesses, and by Augustus himself that I will be loyal to Caesar Augustus and his children and descendants for all the time of my [life], in word, deed and thought.[41]

In Cappadocia, inscriptional evidence shows the existence of a provincial organisation or *koinon* which was responsible for organising emperor worship and other activities related to it.[42] This was three years after its annexation in 20 CE.

In addition, Mitchell records the presence of the local civic cults of Rome and Augustus at the following places:

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[35]Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.55-56. See also V. Ehrenberg and A.H.M. Jones, *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius* (2nd ed; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) 87-89.

[36]Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.55-56. See Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 15-21, for the presence of the imperial cult in Smyrna.

[37]See Winter, *Welfare of the City*, 125-131 for evidence of the presence of the imperial cult in Galatia.

[38]Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I.103.

[39]Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I.104.

[40]See Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I.108 for the list of priests.

[41]Levick, *The Government of the Roman Empire*, 131-132.

[42]Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I.102.

at Pergamum before 1 BC, at Mytilene soon after 27 BC, at Mylasa, where a temple was dedicated between 12 BC and AD 2, at Samos probably by 21 BC, at Erythrae, at Ios between 27 and 13 BC, at Thyateira before 2 BC, at Priene, and at Alabanda.[43]

The extensive spread of the imperial cult in Asia Minor can also be attested by inscriptional evidence of the number of priests serving in the imperial temples. In Asia Minor, priests of Augustus are attested in thirty-four different cities.[44]

The imperial cult not only spread geographically but its practice continued for over two hundred years.[45] Although it underwent some changes during this period, it remained in essentials the same.[46]

The distribution of imperial temples and sanctuaries demonstrates the ongoing importance of the imperial cult in Asia Minor, as can be seen by Price's table below:[47]

50 BCE	- 0	13
0	- CE 50	10
50	- 100	7
100	- 150	15
150	- 200	9
200	- 250	2
Undated		21

In the practice of the imperial cult, the people worshipped both present and past emperors. As time went on, it became common to have generic rather than individual cults. There were priests of the unspecified emperor in six cities, and priests of the emperors past and present in no less then eighty cities.

Thus we see that the practice of the imperial cult was widespread in different parts of Asia Minor for more than two hundred years from 29 BCE. It was the means by which people in Asia Minor related to the emperor in Rome. In many cases it was at the initiative of the people

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[43]Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I.100-102. See the catalogue of 155 entries of imperial temples and shrines in Asia Minor in Price, *Rituals and Power*, 249-274.

[44]Mitchell thinks that this is only a fraction of the original total: Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I.100.

[45]D.L. Jones, "Christianity and the Roman Imperial Cult," *ANRW* II.23.2.1023-1054; Price, *Rituals and Power*, 54-62.

[46]For example, the language conferring honours on the emperor became progressively less elaborate than that used in the reign of Augustus. Nock suggests that by the time of Claudius the practice of the imperial cult had become an outward sign of loyalty which involved little real devotion: Nock, *Conversion, 229*. But this suggestion is rightly refuted by Price, who argues that as time went on, the procedures for the practice of the imperial cult were regularised, and there was no need for the same kind of elaborate language that was used in the honouring of Augustus: Price, *Rituals and Power, 57*.

[47]Price, *Rituals and Power*, 59.

that the imperial cult was estalished. Cities in Asia Minor competed with each other for the privilege of building a new temple for the emperor.[48] In the light of this evidence there is every likelihood that the imperial cult was practised in the cities and villages where Peter's addressees lived.

Wherever the imperial cult was established, all the people were involved in its practice. From the governor, the élite and the rich down to the ordinary people and slaves, the lives of all in the community were affected by the imperial cult, some more directly than the others. The next section will examine the different manifestations of the imperial cult, with particular emphasis on how these impinged on many areas of the lives of the people, both individually and corporately.

4) Practice of the Imperial Cult in Asia Minor

The main feature of the imperial cult was the imperial festival, which was held in honour of the emperor, and often celebrated in conjunction with a local festival. These festivals were organised on a regular basis, but sometimes, were also celebrated irregularly. Instances of irregular celebrations included the accession of a new emperor, the birthday of an emperor, or the receipt of good news concerning a reigning emperor. On a regular basis, imperial festivals could be held once every four years, or once every two years, or in some cities, annually.

Everyone in the community, from the governor to the ordinary person, participated in imperial festivals. Provincial governors would send letters of congratulations to the emperor on important imperial days. As we have noted earlier, they also paid homage to the emperor, and joined "in a two-fold prayer, one on the Emperor's behalf to the gods, one to the Emperor himself concerning his own affairs."[49] In some instances, Roman provincial governors took an active role in promoting the imperial cult.[50]

Next, the *koina* or the local body responsible for emperor worship on a provincial level

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[48]Stambaugh & Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, 151. Asia Minor was the most active region in the whole of the Roman Empire in showing enthusiasm for the imperial cult.

[49]Aristides, *Or.* 26.

[50]Price, *Rituals and Power*, 70-71. Some administrative matters relating to the imperial cult also fell on the Roman governors. For example, when Pliny was governor of Bithynia-Pontus, he consulted Trajan regarding a bequest of money by one Julius Largus of Pontus for a public building to be consecrated in honour of Trajan and for games to be named after him: *Ep.* 10.75-76.

would organise the events appropriate for such occasions.[51] This organisation comprised priests and other official-holders, who came mainly from the rich and élite part of the community. At Ancyra and Pessinus, for example, the leading citizens of the cities held posts connected with the cult. The imperial cult gave to this group of people an opportunity to "express their ambitions, impress their communities, and achieve positions of power and authority."[52] Generally, this was done by holding public office, or by conferring generous public benefactions.[53]

Often the rich provided funds for the celebration of the imperial festivals. They would give banquets for the people, and provide funds for the sacrifices. The Ancyra inscription shows a list of priests who served between 19 and 37 CE, and the contributions they made for the celebration of the imperial festivals.[54] These priests were leading wealthy members of the community, and they provided resources for public banquets, gladiatorial shows, mainly gifts of olive oil, and distributions of grain.

However, the imperial cult did not only concern the Roman governors, and the élite and the rich members of the community. The celebrations were communal events, and imperial festivals were part of the life of the people, and important events in their calendars. Calendars had been regulated by the imperial cult since 9 BCE when the assembly of Greek cities decreed that the New Year would begin on 23rd September, which was Augustus' birthday.[55] The new year was marked by the renewal of vows for the health and safety of the emperor. When Pliny was governor of Bithynia and Pontus, he reported to the emperor that the beginning of the year was marked by the renewal of "annual vows to ensure your safety and therefore that of the state."[56]

The celebrations were centred on the imperial temples and sanctuaries. As noted above,

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[51]Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I.112.

[52]Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I.117.

[53]In *Ep.* 10.70, Pliny refers to a site in Prusa which was formerly bequeathed by one Claudius Polyaenus to the Emperor Claudius Caesar (41-54 CE) with the direction that a temple be erected to the honour of the emperor. Pliny himself purchased land at his own expense and built a temple which would be adorned with the statue of Trajan in honour of the emperor: *Ep.* 10.8.

[54]Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I.107-113.

[55]Lewis & Reinhold, *Roman Civilization II*, 64-65. There were, however, some who continued with their old lunar calendar: Price, *Rituals and Power*, 106.

[56]Pliny, *Ep.* 10.35.

there were more than eighty such in over sixty cities in Asia Minor.[57] These buildings would generally occupy the most prominent places in the cities. In some cities, the temple was found in the civic centre, easily accessible to everyone. Here, statues of the emperor could be found. Statues could also be found in porticoes, in the gymnasia and the theatre. The architecture of the city was also influenced by the practice of the imperial cult.[58] When new temples were erected for the honour of the emperors, they were typically the centrepiece of new cities and communities.

Outside the temples, there would be processions through the streets, and as they passed by, householders were required to sacrifice on altars outside their houses.[59] Everyone was expected to take part, wearing festive attire, especially crowns. The door of one's house would be decorated with laurels and lamps.[60]

Another occasion when all the people of the community participated in the imperial celebration was on the accession of a new emperor. A proclamation of 54 CE invited the people of Oxyrhynchus to wear wreaths and sacrifice oxen in gratitude to all the gods for the accession of the new emperor Nero.[61] It would be reasonable to suppose that people of other provinces were expected to celebrate in a similar way. In one of his letters to Trajan, Pliny reports that the day of his accession to the throne has been celebrated with prayers and the taking of the oath of allegiance:

> And we sincerely implored the Gods to preserve you in health and prosperity, as it is upon your welfare that the security and repose of mankind depend. I have administered the oath of allegiance to my fellow-soldiers in the usual form, the people of the province emulously expressing their affection to you by taking the same oath.[62]

Although it is not stated, their prayers would undoubtedly have been accompanied by sacrifices, and their celebration conducted in the manner of imperial festivals.

It is clear from the above that all sectors of the community participated in the imperial

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[57]Price, *Rituals and Power*, 135. For a catalogue of imperial temples and shrines in Asia Minor, see Price, *Rituals and Power*, 249-274.

[58]Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I.113.

[59]Price, *Rituals and Power*, 112.

[60]See Tertullian's description of imperial festivals: *De Cor.* 1.1.13.

[61]D. Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West: Studies in the Ruler Cult of the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991) 530.

[62]Pliny, *Ep.* 10.52.

festivals, which were the means by which the people, individually and corporately, related to the emperor and expressed their loyalty to him. Imperial worship was so widespread by the early second century CE that when Roman authorities sought a means by which men and women could denounce Christianity and profess their attachment to paganism, oaths and sacrifices to or on behalf of the emperors were the elements common to almost all instances of the enforcement of paganism.[63]

Tertullian (145-220 CE) presents a Christian view of imperial festivities when he writes:

> It is, forsooth, a notable homage to bring fires and couches out before the public, to have feasting from street to street, to turn the city into one great tavern, to make mud with wine, to run in troops to acts of violence, to deeds of shamelessness to lust allurements.[64]

While it is possible that ~~Fertuallian~~ Tertullian has exaggerated the offensive aspect of the celebration of imperial festivals, it is clear from the picture of the imperial cult which we have outlined above that there were certain aspects which were incompatible with the Christian faith. In the next section, I will examine the effect of conversion on the individual's practice of imperial cult, and on the relationship between Christians and non-Christian governing authorities and non-Christian fellow citizens.

5) The Effect of Conversion

a) Rejection of the Imperial Cult

In view of the significant influence of the imperial cult in their lives and in that of their community, conversion will have had very significant implications for Christians in Asia Minor. Before their conversion they will have participated in imperial festivals in their cities and villages. The description of their pre-conversion activities in 1 Peter 4:3 suggests that they had taken part in social and religious activities which involved feasting, carousing, drunkenness and idolatry.[65] Such occasions would include imperial festivals. However, their new-found allegiance to God would have rendered these activities and the basic ethos of the imperial cult incompatible with their beliefs.

Pliny's letter to Trajan revealed the close link between conversion and the rejection of the

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[63]Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.

[64]Tertullian, *Apol.* 35..

[65]See pp. 29-35.

imperial cult.[66] Although this letter is dated a few decades after 1 Peter, there is no reason to think that this close link was not present earlier. By Pliny's time, the Christian community in Bithynia-Pontus comprised persons of both sexes, of all ranks and ages, living in cities and villages and rural districts.[67] Nevertheless, Pliny was very optimistic that the spread of this "contagious superstition" would be successfully curtailed after the trials. He wrote to Trajan:

> It is certain at least that the temples, which had been almost deserted, begin now to be frequented; and the sacred festivals, after a long intermission, are again revived; while there is a general demand for sacrificial animals, which for some time past have met with but few purchasers.

Pliny expected those Christians who had renounced Christ to return to the temples to offer sacrifices, and to participate once again in the sacred festivals, which were part of the practice of the imperial cult. It is significant that in their act of renunciation, they had to worship the statue of the emperor and the images of the gods. This suggests that Christians had turned away from worship of the imperial cult when they were first converted. Now that they had renounced their allegiance to Christ, they had returned to the temples to offer their sacrifices to the emperor and also to the gods.

Even the pagan Pliny knew that genuine Christians would not make offerings to the emperor or renounce Christ. Thus when he tried to distinguish Christians from pagans, Pliny used the test which required the person brought before him to offer frankincense and wine to the image of Trajan and to renounce Christ.[68]

Failure to offer sacrifices to the emperor was a serious matter. The sacred law enacted by the people of Gytheion during Tiberius' reign provided that a sacred fine of 2000 drachmas would have to be paid by the magistrate in charge of the imperial festival in the event of his failure to sacrifice or constrain the communal messes and fellow-magistrates to sacrifice in the market place.[69] As we have noted earlier, Nero's indictment against the consul Thrasea included his evasion of the oaths and his failure to sacrifice for the welfare of the emperor.[70] Thrasea's refusal to participate in these acts provoked the verdict that he was "defiant of the

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[66]Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.

[67]Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.

[68]Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.

[69]Levick, *The Government of the Roman Empire*, 123.

[70]Tacitus, *Ann.* 16.22.1.

institutions and rites of their ancestors," and that he "had openly assumed the part of traitor and public enemy."[71]

Christians could also have no part in the theatre, races, gladiatorial combats and other festivities put on for the celebration of the imperial festivals. Eating food which had been sacrificed during the imperial festivals would also have been offensive to Christians.[72]

Refusal to participate in the imperial festivals would also raise questions about their loyalty towards the emperor.[73] It is often presumed that the governing authorities would retaliate by organised state persecutions against them. However there is no evidence, whether from the text of 1 Peter or from external sources, of organised state persecutions against Christians in Asia Minor at the time of 1 Peter.

Nero's action against Christians in Rome in connection with the fire of 64 CE was limited only to Rome. By Trajan's time (98-117 CE), Christianity had become a capital offence. But Krodel is right to point out that this particular capital offence was not prosecuted actively by the governing authorities.[74] According to Pliny, a list containing many names drawn up by an anonymous informer was published.[75] The initiative came from the people themselves, rather than from the official sector. Trajan himself confirmed that Christians must not be sought out.[76]

b) Hostility from Non-Christian Fellow Citizens

Rejection of the imperial cult by Christians created rifts between them and their non-Christian fellow citizens. Hostility came from fellow members of the community rather than the authorities. There were various reasons for this hostility. As indicated above, non-participation in the imperial festivals called into question their loyalty to the emperor. When a substantial number of Christians refuse to join in the festivities, it would be noticeable by their ~~fellowmen~~ fellow men,

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[71]Tacitus, *Ann.* 16.28.

[72]Wengst, *Pax Romana*, 121.

[73]See Wengst, *Pax Romana*, 50: "If the emperor represents the empire in that the common good depends on his wholeness, then not to take part in the ritual processes which were meant to celebrate and establish the well-being of the emperor inevitably aroused the suspicion of fundamental political disloyalty."

[74]Krodel, "Persecution and Toleration of Christianity," 261.

[75]Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.

[76]Pliny, *Ep.* 10.97.

who would perceive that such omission would threaten the political and social interests of the whole community. Their abstinence would be construed as disloyalty to the governing authorities, not only on an individual basis but corporately, since imperial worship was seen by the people of Asia Minor as an important corporate expression of their loyalty to the emperor.[77]

Often the request for the emperor's permission to establish a cult in his honour in a particular city was accompanied by anticipation of imperial favour upon the city.[78] The emperors understood this convention. When they accepted honours from the people, they knew that they were accepting obligations. When the people of Aezani in Phrygia sent envoys to offer their good wishes to Tiberius upon his accession to the throne, Tiberius replied in a letter saying,

> [Having known] long since of your [devotion and] affection for me it was also with the greatest pleasure that on the present occasion I received [from] your envoys [the decree which] demonstrates the good will of the city towards me. I shall [accordingly] endeavour [to the best of] my ability to play my part in promoting [your interests on all] occasions on which you request [my help].[79]

On another occasion, Tiberius had the freedom of the Cyzicenes removed, partly for their disrespect to his father Augustus for failing to finish a temple to him.[80]

Thus the people often expressed their loyalty to the emperor in Rome in anticipation of privileges and benefits. This was also the way by which the emperor secured the political submission of his subjects. Failure by Christians to participate in the imperial festivals would jeopardise any privileges or benefits which the community might have hoped to receive or had already received from the emperor.[81] This would, no doubt, lead non-Christians to be hostile to Christians.

More generally, Christian withdrawal from communal and social activities, of which imperial festivals formed an integral part, will have given an anti-social impression. This is

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[77]See pp.115-118.

[78]See Price, *Rituals and Power*, 65-77 where he uses "a system of gift-exchange" to analyse this. See also F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World (31 BC - AD 337)* (London: Gerald Duckwork & Co., 1977) 420-434 for imperial benefactions.

[79]Levick, *The Government of the Roman Empire*, 118.

[80]Price, *Rituals and Power*, 66.

[81]Price, *Rituals and Power*, 66.

what seems to lie behind the references in 1 Peter to abuse and slander (4:4), accusations of wrongdoing (2:12), and malicious distortions of their good conduct (3:16).

Peter does not elaborate on the specific slander or charges which have been made against his addressees. But a study of one ancient literary source gives us an idea of the content of slander against Christians. In Tacitus' account of the great fire of Rome of 64 CE, Christians are said to have been "convicted, not so much on the count of arson as for hatred of the human race." [82] The phrase *odium humani generis* has been taken to correspond to the Greek term μισανθρωπία, which means a neglect of one's duty to one's fellow citizens, a withdrawal from the rest of society.[83] This would include a withdrawal from social and cultic activities.

Christians in Asia Minor will have withdrawn from an integral aspect of community life in rejecting imperial worship, and it is highly probable that their non-Christian fellow citizens, in effect, accused them of "hatred of the human race." In Colwell's words:

> the bitterness that led to this charge ["haters of mankind"] would be produced, we may be sure, not only by their conspicuous absence as a group from these affairs, but also in individual cases by a Christian's refusal to accompany a neighbor to the stadium or the theater.[84]

A third reason for the hostility from their non-Christian fellow citizens may have been that the economic interests of these non-Christians had been adversely affected when Christians turned away from the imperial cult to the Christian faith. Pliny's letter notes that Christian renunciation of their faith would fill the temples which were almost deserted, and that the meat of sacrificial victims was on sale again. Previously there had been very few buyers.[85] Pliny had grasped the essential link between conversion and the rejection of the imperial cult, and the economic consequence brought about by the decline in the purchase of sacrificial animals. Wilken seems correct in his suggestion that those who complained about the Christians in

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[82]Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44. See also S. Benko, "Pagan Criticism of Christianity during the first two centuries A.D.," *ANRW* II.23.2. 1055-1068.

[83]See P. Keresztes, "The Imperial Roman Government and the Christian Church: From Nero to the Severi," *ANRW* II.23.1.245-257, where he argues for the following interpretation of Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44: "Therefore, first, those who confessed and, then, on their information, a vast number of them were prosecuted and they were joined together not so much in the charge of arson *as in their being loathed by all men*" (emphasis mine).

[84]E.C. Colwell, "Popular Reaction Against Christianity in the Roman Empire," in J.T. McNeill, M. Spinka & H.R. Willoughby (eds.), *Environmental Factors in Christian History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939) 62.

[85]Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.

Pliny's letter were local citizens whose interests were adversely affected by the conversion of Christians.[86] These could be local merchants, butchers and others involved in the slaughter and sale of sacrificial animals.

In view of the significant implications of Christian withdrawal from imperial worship, there would be heavy pressure from their non-Christian fellow citizens to conform. Mitchell well describes the awkwardess of this situation:

> In the urban setting of Pisidian Antioch where spectacular and enticing public festivals imposed conformity and a rhythm of observation on a compact population, where Christians could not (if they wanted to) conceal their beliefs and activities from their fellows, it was not a change of heart that might win a Christian convert back to paganism, but the overwhelming pressure to conform imposed by the institutions of his city and the activities of his neighbours.[87]

Christians thus found themselves in a dilemma. Hostility from non-Christians would alienate them even more from society, as we noted when we analysed the situation from a socio-scientific perspective in Chapter 2. Hostility from non-Christians would drastically reduce the social linkages between Christians and non-Christians, and would increasingly tighten the boundaries around the Christian community, perhaps leading to a total withdrawal of Christians from society. Peter's response shows Christians how to relate to the governing authorities and their fellow citizens in a way that is consistent with their beliefs, and in a way that will affirm their loyalty to the governing authorities and their commitment to the welfare of their community.

6) Peter's Exhortation: 2:13-17

a) Submit to Governing Authorities

With regard to their response to non-Christian governing authorities, Peter instructs Christians in Asia Minor to submit to them (2:13). Submission to authority and obedience of the laws of the land were part of the pagan code of conduct in society.[88] According to Plutarch, this code of social conduct taught that

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[86]R.L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans saw them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984) 15. See also Acts 19:23-41.

[87]Mitchell, *Anatolia*, II.10.

[88]Hierocles, *On Duties. How to Conduct Oneself toward One's Fatherland.* Text and translation in Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, 89.

one ought to reverence the gods, to honour one's parents, to respect one's elders, to be obedient to the laws, to yield to those in authority (ἄρχοῦσιν ὑπείκειν), to love one's friends, to be chaste with women, to be affectionate with children, and not to be overbearing with slaves.

In urging Christians in Asia Minor to submit to their governing authorities, Peter is therefore encouraging them to comply with the code of social conduct of the day.

However submission for the Christian would have to be redefined in the light of a primary allegiance to God. We saw earlier that people in Asia Minor expressed their loyalty to the emperor through the practice of the imperial cult. In spite of the fact that they could no longer participate in certain practices of the imperial cult, Christians could not withdraw from society, but had to find a way of expressing their loyalty to the emperor, and one that would be obvious to their fellow citizens. Their actions must not be interpreted as subversive or disloyal. Christians had to show that they were not subversive elements but good citizens, who respected the governing authorities and cared for the welfare of the community.

However their submission to governing authorities could not extend to their participation in the imperial cult. Thus Peter qualifies his injunction to submit with διὰ τὸν κύριον (2:13).[89] Christ the Lord is the real basis of their subordination within the wider context of their obedience to God.[90]

b) "Do Good"

With the qualification in 2:13, Peter exhorts Christians to submit to governing authorities by doing good (ἀγαθοποιεῖν; 2:15). Doing good qualifies or interprets the instruction to submit.[91] It is clear from 2:15 that it is the act of doing good that will silence "the ignorant talk of foolish men." Doing good will earn the praise of the authorities, for the dual function of the ruling authorities is to punish evil and to praise good (ἀγαθοποιεῖν; 2:14).[92] κακοποιῶν here is contrasted with ἀγαθοποιῶν in the latter part of the verse, just as punishment is contrasted with praise.

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[89]Prostmeier argues that the phrase διὰ τὸν κύριον is the basis for the conduct of Christians, offering a model of Christian action: *Handlungsmodelle*, 399. However in his concern to look for models for Christian behaviour, he has overlooked the important theme of "doing good" in the different relationships in 2:13-3:12.

[90]Achtemeier, 182.

[91]Michaels, 167.

[92]Similar wording is found in Rom. 13:3.

But how did the governing authorities praise those who had done good? What does ἀγαθοποιεῖν mean in this context of relationship between Christians and non-Christian governing authorities and non-Christian fellow citizens? How will doing good silence "the ignorant talk of foolish men" (2:15)?

Most commentators are agreed that the language used in 2:14 for the act of praising the good works of citizens refers to public benefactions. Selwyn, for example, sees the phrase ἔπαινον δὲ ἀγαθοποιῶν as the "positive statement exemplified in such recognition of meritorious service as is contained in the Honours list."[93] But he does not elaborate. Michaels holds the same view, but the immediate context of verse 14 suggests to him that the author's language is theological, rather than literal or historical. Those who do good are those who act according to the will of God, and thus bring the Gentiles to him.[94]

Winter goes a step further than these commentators, and argues that the praising by rulers of good works in 2:14 and Romans 13:3 refers specifically to public benefactions.[95] First, he adduces epigraphic and literary evidence to show that in the ancient world there were established conventions for benefactors to be publicly recognised and commended. His evidence includes the form of the benefaction inscription as used in Graeco-Roman society.[96]

Next, Winter proceeds to describe the public nature of the procedure of conferring honours on public benefactors. The procedure began when someone moved a motion in the Council that a particular benefactor be granted certain honours. When approved, this particular benefactor would be honoured in a public ceremony, and the erection of an inscription in a public place would bear witness to the event. Thus, Winter sees ἔπαινος in 2:14 as referring to this public recognition, which would have been witnessed by people in the community (cf. 2:12).

Having adduced epigraphic and literary evidence to show that public benefactors were honoured publicly in the ancient world, Winter goes on to suggest that the good works referred to in Romans 13:3-4 and 2:14 relate specifically to public benefactions. With regard to the word used for denoting good works (2:14 uses ἀγαθοποιῶν), Winter cites similar

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[93]Selwyn, 173.

[94]Michaels, 126. See also Marshall, 84; Goppelt, 185-186; Beare, 143; Best, 114.

[95]Winter, *Welfare of the City*, 26-33.

[96]For a standard form of benefaction inscription, see Winter, *Welfare of the City*, 26-27.

wording (τὸ ἀγαθὸν ποιεῖν) in epigraphic inscriptions to refer to the act of public benefaction.[97]

Winter then turns his attention to the word ἔπαινος, and observes that

> Epigraphic evidence includes the following words of praise, doing good and being a benefactor: ἐπαινέσαι ... ὅτι εὖ ποιεῖ ἐπειδὴ εὖ ποιεῖ ... ἀναγραψάτω ... καὶ εὐεργέτην ποιεῖν ὅτι δύναται ἀγαθὸν καὶ εὖ ποιεῖ ... ἐπαινέσαι τὸ αὐτῷ καὶ ἀναγράψαι αὐτὸν ... εὐεργέτην Ἀθηναίων. Because this term appears in the discussion of the role of leaders in the city, it would have been connected immediately with the conventions surrounding public recognition of benefactors.[98]

This then was the way by which the authorities would know of the good works of Christian citizens in Asia Minor. The authorities would surely know of wrongdoers, for their accusers would bring them to court. But they would not be able to see their good works unless they were expressed in a way that would receive public recognition according to the social conventions of the day. According to Winter, they could do this through public benefactions.

Winter gives various examples of acts of public benefaction derived from inscriptional evidence. They included supplying grain in times of necessity, forcing down the price by selling it in the market below the asking rate, erecting public buildings or adorning old buildings, refurbishing the theatre, widening roads, helping in the construction of public utilities, going on embassies to gain privileges for the city, and helping the city in times of civil upheaval.[99] Danker, in his study of benefactors in the Graeco-Roman world, lists some specific types of benefits.[100] They included relief from oppression, forgiveness of debts and amnesty, promoting stability and the common welfare of the people by the restoration of peace, disaster relief and the maintenance of the general welfare, healing by physicians, and monetary donations.

Winter has made out a persuasive case. This is a valuable contribution to our understanding of doing good in 2:14-15. However Winter's discussion has failed to take into

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[97]However, it is to be noted that Winter's treatment of τὸ ἀγαθὸν ποιεῖν only deals with Rom. 13:3-4. He draws no evidence to show that inscriptions praising public benefactions used the term ἀγαθοποιός found at 2:14. This, however, is not a fatal flaw to Winter's arguments as both terms have a similar meaning.

[98]Winter, *Welfare of the City*, 35-36.

[99]Winter, *Welfare of the City*, 37.

[100]F.D.W. Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field* (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, 1982) 393-416. It must be noted that Danker makes no reference to 1 Pet. 2:14 in his study of public benefactors.

consideration several relevant matters. First, he has not considered other acts which would be judged as good by Graeco-Roman authorities and would earn their praise. Secondly, he has not set his discussion of 2:14-15 against the socio-historical background of the imperial cult. Thirdly, Winter has not shown how 2:14-15, as he interprets them, relate to verses 16 and 17. I will attempt to fill in these gaps below.

First, Winter's definition of doing good may be too restrictive. He has not considered Balch's view that the phrase "praise those doing good" in 2:14 means "to praise those who were properly obedient".[101] Balch cites three examples in support. One is Dionysius of Halicarnassus "eulogizing" Rome because her constitution provided for proper submission of women to their husbands and the obedience of children for their parents.[102] Another example is that of Libanius, who in his encomium of Antioch praised the common people because they showed obedience towards their superiors.[103] Dionysius' pupil, Metilius Rufus, later became proconsul of Achaea under Augustus and possibly a legate of Galatia. A third example is Areius Didymus, whose work *Epitome* also contained similar elements of household submissiveness.[104] Areius became imperial procurator in Sicily. According to Balch, these governors regarded household ethics of submissiveness as important for society, and they would praise those who "were properly obedient."

Balch's view is supported by the contrast between κακοποιῶν and ἀγαθοποιῶν. As the former refers to those who had done evil and would receive punishment from the governing authorities, so the latter points to those who obeyed the law and would receive praise. Law-abiding citizens were by no means overlooked by the governors. One clear example is Pliny's report to Trajan that Christians "even gave up this practice [of meeting together] after my edict, when, in response to your order, I forbade associations."[105] While there were no specific words of praise here, Pliny's note of approval is evident. It was clearly an act which he thought was significant enough to bring to Trajan's attention. Here then is one example of a governor taking cognizance of the fact that a group of Christians in Bithynia in the early second century

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[101]Balch, *Wives*, 94.

[102]*Rom. Ant.* 2.24.3-2.27.4 cited in Balch, *Wives*, 74.

[103]*Orations* xi.154, 151 cited in Balch, *Wives*, 94.

[104]Balch, Wives, 74.

[105]Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.

had obeyed his edict.

Thus doing good is not confined to acts of public benefactions. More generally it means obeying the laws. With this broader definition, the injunction to do good is not limited only to the rich members of the Christian congregations in Asia Minor, but to all members. Winter's narrower definition has led him to conclude that "there must have been Christians of very considerable means to warrant Paul's injunction in [Romans 13:3] and that of 1 Peter 2:15,"[106] for it is apparent from the list of public benefactions above that one had to be rich in order to be a benefactor. If there were no Christians of substantial means in the congregations, then Peter's injunction would be merely rhetorical.

Winter's view of the presence of Christians of "very considerable means" goes against the commonly held view that Christians in Asia Minor were generally from the poorer sector of society. Commentators like Beare and Best are very doubtful that the readers of 1 Peter were of such social status that they could contribute to the welfare of the city, and be publicly honoured by the authorities, although they accept that doing good refers to public benefaction.[107] They argue that this absence of rich Christians is evidenced by the omission of specific instructions to Christian masters in the congregations in 1 Peter.

However, Peter's failure to address Christian masters can be attributed to reasons other than their absence from the congregations of Asia Minor. One must consider Peter's purpose in 2:13-3:12. The distinguishing factor here is that it is specifically directed towards Christians in their social relationships with non-Christians. There was no express provision for Christian masters because the relationship between Christian masters and non-Christians slaves was not an issue at all! Slaves would take on their masters' religion. It was precisely the fact that slaves had to take on their masters' religion that placed Christian slaves in a difficult position, for they could not worship their masters' gods: hence Peter's discussion of this issue in 2:18-25.[108] Thus, his failure to address Christian masters does not necessarily imply that there were few rich among the Christians.

It is thus possible that there were some among the Christian congregations in Asia Minor

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[106]Winter, *Welfare of the City*, 37.

[107]Beare, 143; Best, 114. To overcome the problem that Peter's injunction might have been mere rhetoric, Best suggests that the "praise" of 2:14 may have been a reference to acquittal in the law courts, thereby giving a balance to the first half of the verse which deals with legal proceedings.

[108]See Chapter 6 below.

who could be rich enough to render acts of public benefaction. However the injunctions to submit to governing authorities and to do good in 2:13-15 are addressed to the whole Christian community, rather than to a particular group. Peter has not addressed his hearers in the singular as Paul does in Romans 13:4. Winter supports his case by arguing that the use of σοὶ in Romans 13:4 shows that "it is addressed to the individual rather than the whole church."[109] But the verbs used in 2:13-17 are in the plural.

All members of the Christian community would have the capacity to do good by obeying the laws. But how would they all have the ability to do good by acts of public benefaction? Peter might have envisaged the Christian community as a whole performing acts of public benefaction, rather than a few individual rich members. This would be similar to acts of public benefaction performed by trade guilds or associations in Graeco-Roman society.[110] Some of these acts of benefaction were performed directly in connection with the imperial festivals.[111] Members of these trade guilds would often participate in the imperial festivals by parading their banners through the streets in homage to the emperor.[112] These associations would also contribute to the shows and spectacles, which were a common part of the imperial festivals.[113] In the same way that members of voluntary associations could perform acts of public benefaction corporately, so members of Christian communities could do good in a way that would secure the praise of the people.

Secondly, as noted above Winter has failed to set 2:14-15 against the background of the imperial cult. However when one does this, one immediately senses how intense will have been the dilemma faced by Christians living in a society where their relations with the governing authorities and fellow citizens were dominated by the practice of the cult. It is in the context of the conflict and dilemma arising from this situation that public benefactions by Christians would affirm their loyalty to the governing authorities and their commitment to the wellbeing of their fellow citizens and their community.

In 2:15 Peter asserts that doing good is the will of God, and that it will silence "the

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[109]Winter, *Welfare of the City*, 37.

[110]See pp. 26-27. MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 73-87, 177.

[111]Price, *Rituals and Power*, 118.

[112]MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 76.

[113]MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, 175.

ignorant talk of foolish men." As we have seen above, "ignorant talk" may be reference to accusations of disloyalty and subversive intentions against the governing authorities, and lack of commitment to the wellbeing of the community, accusations made when Christians withdrew from participating in the imperial cult.[114] These accusations would be quashed when non-Christians saw the good works of Christians (cf. 2:12), for they would recognise the works as good according to their own standard.[115]

We have also noted that civil obedience and acts of public benefaction in Graeco-Roman society were met with commendation and public honours by the appropriate authorities. Thus acts of civil obedience by Christians would help to silence any accusation by non-Christians that they were disloyal to the governing authorities. They would be obeying the laws, just as the pagans were, and in so doing were expressing their submission to the governing authorities. Similarly acts of public benefaction by the Christian community would be judged good by non-Christians. They would be evidence that Christians in their society were committed to the well-being of the city or village in which they were living. It is worth quoting again Plutarch's advice on how one should defend oneself against one's enemy:

> By proving yourself good and honourable. What, think you, would be their state of mind if you were to show yourself to be an honest, sensible man and a useful citizen, of high repute in speech, clean in actions, orderly in living, outdo your enemies in diligence, goodness, magnanimity, kindly deeds and good works. These are the things which, as Demosthenes puts it "retard the tongue, stop the mouth, constrict the throat, and leave one with nothing to say.[116]

Peter anticipates a similar outcome in 2:15.

A further factor comes into play here, and this relates to the social convention of giving and receiving in Graeco-Roman society. Winter has rightly pointed out that in Graeco-Roman society, acts of benefactions were met with gratitude by the authorities.[117] When one gave, one placed on the recipient an obligation of gratitude. The recipient's expression of gratitude in turn placed a demand upon the benefactor.[118] This was an important factor in binding Graeco-Roman society together. According to Seneca, benefits formed the greatest bond of human

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[114]See pp. 126-127.

[115]See Chapter 4 above.

[116]Plutarch, *Mor.* 88B.

[117]Winter, *Welfare of the City*, 28-30.

[118]Mott, "The Power of Giving and Receiving," 60-74.

society.[119] To Cicero, *justitia* and *beneficentia* are the two factors maintaining society.[120]

This social convention of giving and receiving reached all levels of Graeco-Roman society. Thus, when the Christian community put into practice Peter's exhortation to do good, for example by widening roads or helping in the construction of public utilities or supplying grain in times of need, these acts would undoubtedly earn the gratitude of the community. The community would be able to see that even though Christians could no longer participate with them in the imperial cult, they were still committed to their welfare, and were in no danger of subverting their interests. The good works of Christians would silence their accusers.

Thirdly, Winter has not shown how public benefactions in 2:14-15 relate to 2:16-17. 2:16 exhorts Christians in Asia Minor to live as free men and as servants of God. But they must not use their freedom as a cover-up for evil. This follows from verse 14, and qualifies the manner in which they are to do good. Their obedience to the laws and their acts of public benefactions cannot be absolute on account of their primary allegiance to God. Public benefactions were often made in connection with the imperial cult. In an inscription honouring Kleanax of Kyme in Asia Minor in the early first century CE, the list of his contributions included continuous benefits for his city, and the provision of annual feasts for the people of the city. He also undertook

> the Games of Augustus conducted by (the Assembly) of Asia, just as he announced, the sacrifices and festivities sacrificing oxen to Imperator Casear Augustus to his sons and to the other gods, after which he also held a feast.[121]

The city honoured Kleanax for these good deeds.

While such acts of public benefactions related to the imperial cult constituted doing good in the eyes of Graeco-Roman society, these would not be acts appropriate for Christians. In verse 16 Peter makes two qualifications as regards the manner in which Christians are to do good.

The first qualification is that Christians must do good as free men (ὡς ἐλεύθεροι). Most commentators see this freedom as freedom in the theological sense, rather than in the political

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[119]Seneca, *Ben.* 1.4.1.

[120]Cicero, *Off.* 1.20.1.

[121]S.R. Llewlyn and R.A. Kearsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* 7 (1994) 233-236.

or social sense.[122] However, freedom in Christ is not a major theme in 1 Peter, in contrast to the treatment of freedom in Paul's letters.[123] The two references to freedom in 1 Peter both occur in 2:13-17. Christians are to subject themselves to the governing authorities as free people. They had the same political and social freedom which their pagan neighbours had, and they were to exercise this freedom to remain in their community and to do good. However, this freedom is itself subject to a further qualification: they must not use this freedom as a cover-up for "evil deeds". The reference to evil seems to follow on from the reference to punishment of evildoers (ἐκδίκησιν κακοποιῶν) in 2:14, that is, it has in view evil deeds which will be punished by the governing authorities. The claim to freedom cannot be put up as a defence for wrongdoing.

Secondly, Peter does not wish to imply that Christians have the same political and social freedom as their pagan neighbours. So Peter lays down a second qualification, that Christians are to do good as slaves of God. As slaves of God, Christians cannot disobey God or conduct themselves in a way that is incompatible with their beliefs. Their good works must reflect their political and social freedom, but it must also reflect their subjection to the authority of God. Thus, it would be incompatible for Christians to do good to the community by erecting a statue in honour of the emperor, or by providing funds for sacrifices, or by providing olive oil for the imperial temples.

Verse 17 sums up the way Christians are to relate to God, to other believers, to the emperor, and to everyone in society. These four imperatives have been interpreted in different ways. Some commentators have inserted a colon after the first clause, taking it to be a heading for the remaining three.[124] Others have grouped the four imperatives into two groups, the first two phrases together and then the last two.[125] Yet others have taken the four clauses as four separate injunctions, arguing for a chiastic structure (a-b-b-a). Bammel, for instance, argues that there is a distinction between God and the emperor in the last two clauses, and there is a similar distinction between the first two clauses.[126] But as the same verb is used in the first

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[122]See, e.g., "freedom in Christ from the 'ignorance' (1:14) or 'darkness' (2:9) of paganism" in Michaels, 128; for Beare, it is the "liberating power of the Gospel": Beare, 144.

[123]Articles on freedom in NT in TDNT focus mainly on Paul's view of freedom in Christ.

[124]So too NIV and NEB.

[125]Beare, 144; Goppelt, 189-190.

[126]E. Bammel, "The Commands in 1 Peter II.17," *NTS* 11 (1964/65) 279-281.

and the last clause, there is a relation between the two, and there is very likely a relation between the second and third imperatives as well. Thus the injunction to love the brotherhood of believers and to fear God is framed by the exhortation to respect all people, including non-Christians, and to respect the emperor.

This chiastic structure would be consistent with our understanding of 2:13-17. We have seen that this passage deals with relations between Christians and non-Christian governing authorities and fellow citizens. The first and last clauses of verse 17 summarise their response in a succinct way. With regard to both groups, Christians are exhorted to respect or honour them. They are to honour the emperor, and to honour non-Christians, including those who have abused them with "ignorant talk."

But Peter stresses the contrast between these relationships and their relationship to their God and their Christian brothers and sisters. Honour is due to the emperor, but fear is due to God. The implication here is that the former is subservient to the latter. They must honour the emperor and his authorised representatives, but they must not do any act that belied their fear of God. Thus, Christians could neither bow down to worship the emperor, nor offer sacrifices to him. Instead, they must do good to show their loyalty to the emperor, and actively promote the welfare of their community.

The imperative for Christians to love the brotherhood of believers balances the injunction to honour or respect all. 1 Peter is concerned with both sets of relationships. 1:22-2:10, 4:7-11 and 5:1-11 expand on relationships with other Christians, which must be characterised by love for one another. 2:11-3:17 and 4:12-19 clarify the nature of their relationship with non-Christians. Christians must show respect to non-Christians and do good.

7) Summary

Upon conversion, Christians in Asia Minor had withdrawn from participation in the imperial cult, which was an integral part of community life. This alienation had adverse implications for their relationship with the governing authorities, and their non-Christian neighbours and friends. In 2:13-17 Peter instructs them on how to conduct themselves in these relationships. They must not withdraw totally into their Christian communities, but must remain in their cities and villages with ~~other~~ their pagan neighbours and do good. Through their law-abiding and respect for others, and their acts of public benefaction, Christians will be able to demonstrate their loyalty

and honour to the governing authorities, and their commitment to the wellbeing of their community. Their good deeds will muzzle the mouths of their accusers.

CHAPTER 6

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHRISTIAN SLAVES AND NON-CHRISTIAN MASTERS (2:18-25)

In 2:18-20 Peter addresses the first of two specific groups within the Christian congregations, οἱ οἰκέται.[1] Although some translations like The New English Bible and the Revised English Bible have rendered οἱ οἰκέται as "servants,"[2] the term refers to household slaves.[3] The word "servants" conjures up a mental picture of modern domestic help, and does not portray faithfully the picture of a slave in Graeco-Roman society.

Other NT authors address Christian slaves as δοῦλοι.[4] In 1 Peter, δοῦλοι is used in 2:16 to designate all addressees as slaves of God.[5] Peter's use of οἰκέται shows that he has a particular section of his addressees in mind.

Peter shows himself familiar with the situation of household slaves in Graeco-Roman society. He is aware that there are good and fair masters, but also harsh ones (2:18). Submission to masters was expected of all slaves. He is also aware, and this must have also been common knowledge to all, that wrongdoing by a slave deserved punishment (2:20a). Peter sets his injunctions to Christian slaves in the context of the master-slave relationship of Graeco-Roman society. Thus we must take seriously the socio-historical background of slavery in our discussion of 2:18-25.

The first part of this chapter will describe briefly the master-slave relationship in Graeco-Roman society. We will then examine the likely effect of a slave's conversion on his relationship with his master, in particular the dilemma faced by a Christian slave. Setting the text against the socio-historical background of slavery will also help us to understand more clearly Peter's injunction to Christian slaves to do good and to endure suffering in 2:18-20.

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[1]The second group is Christian wives (3:1-6), which is the subject of Chapter 7 below.

[2]Michaels has also done the same.

[3]*BAGD* 557. See also Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 14.10 where οἰκέται and δεσπόται are used, as in 2:18.

[4]See Eph. 6:5; Col. 4:22; 1 Tim. 6:1; Tit. 2:9.

[5]Similarly, masters are not referred to as κύριος, a word which Peter reserves for God or Jesus Christ (e.g., 1:3). Instead he uses δεσπόται for masters. The only exception to this is in 3:6, but here the language follows Old Testament usage.

In 2:21-25, Peter bases this injunction on the supreme example of Jesus Christ, alluding to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. This will be taken up in the second part of the chapter.

1) Master-Slave Relationship in Graeco-Roman Society

By the first century CE, slavery as a social institution had become an integral part of life in the Roman Empire.[6] Slaves could be seen everywhere engaged in different types of everyday tasks. Slaves were owned by both the rich and those of relatively humble means.[7] Those who had the means would buy slaves (οἰκέται) to relieve them of work.[8]

Slaves were found both in the city and in rural areas.[9] Masters relied wholly on slaves to do most of the essential work in the household or on the farm.[10] There was no occupation in Graeco-Roman society which was closed to slaves.[11] Some managed farms; some were involved in industry and crafts, e.g., as leather cutters, embroiderers, and miners.[12]

Slaves could be seen in everyday commercial life, where they were involved as agents for their masters in shopkeeping, trading and banking.[13] In the household, slaves who served as nurses, tutors and physicians were often in positions of trust.[14] Others were involved in everyday tasks, like cleaning and cooking.[15]

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[6]For a survey of issues on slavery, see M.I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1980) 11-66, and J. Vogt, *Ancient Slavery and the Ideal of Man* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974) 170-210; For a historical survey, see P. Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996).

[7]A.H.M. Jones, "Slavery in the Ancient World" in M.I. Finley (ed.), *Slavery in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Ltd., 1960) 1-15. Tacitus records the case of Pedanius Secundus, prefect of the city under Nero, whose town house was served by 400 slaves: Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.43. In the 4th century BCE, even poor peasant farmers might well own a maidservant: Demosthenes, *Against Timocrates* 24.197.

[8]Xenophon, *Mem.* 2.3.3.

[9]For legal purposes, slaves were divided into two groups: the *familia urbana* and the *familia rustica*: W.W. Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery* (Cambridge: CUP, 1970 Rep.) 6.

[10]D.P. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 11-15, 166-167.

[11]The only exception is military service, from which slaves were legally barred.

[12]W.L. Westermann, "Slavery and the Elements of Freedom in Ancient Greece", in M.I. Finley (ed.), *Slavery in Classical Antiquity*, 20.

[13]Bradley, *Slavery and Society,* 75.

[14]Vogt, *Ancient Slavery*, 103-121.

[15]See Bradley, *Slavery and Society*, 62-63 for a list of jobs in élite households. In humbler homes, slaves would be required to do most of the jobs.

There are two difficulties when examining slavery in Graeco-Roman society. First, there was great diversity in the slavery system, and one would do well to take seriously Bradley's caution that "any attempt to define its general features must allow for the unanticipated and the exceptional."[16] According to Martin, social historians have increasingly emphasised the "complexity and ambiguity of slavery in antiquity."[17] Biblical scholars must also take note.

Secondly, there is the difficulty regarding sources. Most of the material on slavery was written by slave owners, whose views on this matter might be expected to be somewhat biased. Nevertheless there is sufficient evidence in ancient literature and inscriptions to enable us to paint a broad picture of slavery in the ancient world.[18]

In this section, I shall describe certain aspects of this complex institution of slavery from the perspective of the relationship between master and slave. The aim is to paint a picture of a slave's life in the ancient world, taking into consideration the kind of slave he was and the type of master he served.

a) Status of Slaves as *Res*

Although slaves could be found in almost every sector of the ancient economy, their status set them apart from others in society. Slaves were considered as *res*, property which belonged exclusively to their owners. The mentality of slave owners in the ancient world is best reflected in Aristotle's words:

> Of property, the first and most indispensable kind is that which is also the best and most amenable to Housecraft; and this is the human chattel. Our first step therefore must be to procure good slaves.[19]

Slaveowners, while regarding slaves as indispensable, treated them only as *res*. This meant that the slave was bound by a fundamental loss of personal liberty. He had no legal rights at all, and could not do what he wished, or go where he desired.[20] Thus slaves were totally in the

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[16]Bradley, *Slavery and Society*, 4.

[17]Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 1.

[18]Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 1-2.

[19]Aristotle, *Oec.* 1.5.1.

[20]Westermann, "Slavery and the Elements of Freedom in Ancient Greece," 17-32.

power of their masters, who had the right to dispose of them at will.[21]

Slavemasters expected total submission from their slaves. But spontaneous and willing submission from slaves was not common. According to Cicero, there was a common belief among slaveowners that slaves had a tendency to commit wicked deeds.[22] Seneca, in his letter to Lucilius, touches on the subject of the master-slave relationship and refers to the contemporary saying: "As many enemies as you have slaves."[23] He explains the saying:

> Every slave wields the power of life and death over you. Therefore I declare to you: he is lord of your life that scorns his own. Think of those who have perished through plots in their own houses, slain either openly or by guile.[24]

Another common belief among slaveowners was that slaves were prone to laziness, and must be coerced to work. In his handbook on farm management, Columella (1st century CE) advises against the appointment of urban slaves for the post of overseer. His view of urban slaves is typical: "This lazy and sleepy-headed class of servant, accustomed to idling, to the Campus, the Circus, and the theatres, to gambling, to cook shops, to bawdy-houses".[25]

Xenophon describes the way masters brought lazy slaves into subjection:

> 'But now let us see how masters treat such servants. Do they not starve them to keep them from immorality, lock up the stores to stop their stealing, clap fetters on them so that they can't run away, and beat the laziness out of them with whips? What do you do yourself to cure such faults among your servants?' 'I make their lives a burden to them until I reduce them to submission.'[26]

Thus from the slaveowners' perspective, a slave had to be coerced and worn down into submission to his master.[27] Cicero advised that it was the duty of owners to "keep them in hand everywhere."[28]

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[21]*Institutes of Gaius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976 Rep.) I.52,: "Slaves are in the *potestas* of their masters. This *potestas* is *iuris gentium*, for it is observable that among all nations alike masters have power of life and death over their slaves, and whatever is acquired through a slave is acquired for his master."

[22]Cicero, *Att.* 7.2.8.

[23]*Ep.* 47.5.

[24]Seneca, *Ep.* 4.8. According to Macrobius, slaves became enemies of their owners because of the latter's inordinate pride, insolence and cruelty: *Sat.* 1.11.13.

[25]Columella, *Rust.* 1.8.1.

[26]Xenophon, *Mem.* 2.1.16-17.

[27]Cicero, *Rep.* 37. It is this aspect of obedience that distinguished the master-slave relationship from that of the father-son relationship or the husband-wife relationship, where the son and the wife were expected to obey willingly. See also Tacitus, *Ann.* 6.11.3.

[28]Cicero, *Q Fr.* 1.1.17; *Off.* 2.24.

Slaveowners used different methods to keep their slaves "in hand." Some used force or the threat of force to control their slaves.[29] Some masters put slaves of different nationalities together to make conspiracy difficult.[30] Tacitus saw no other way to control slaves from different nations except by terror.[31] According to Plutarch, Cato was one who "was always contriving that his slaves should have feuds and dissensions among themselves," for harmony among his slaves made him suspicious and fearful of them.[32] On Trimalchio's doorpost was this warning to his slaves: "NO SLAVE TO GO OUT OF DOORS EXCEPT BY THE MASTER'S ORDERS. PENALTY, ONE HUNDRED LASHES."[33]

Other slaveowners treated their slaves more kindly in order to secure their loyalty and submission. Seneca argued that a master who treated his slaves well, permitting them to converse not only in his presence, but also with him, would find these slaves "ready to bare their necks for their master, to bring upon their own heads any danger that threatened him."[34] When masters treated their slaves with generosity, it was the masters who benefitted as well as the slaves.[35]

b) Life of a Slave in Graeco-Roman Society

As *res*, the slave was completely powerless under the total control of his master, and was expected to submit unreservedly to him. In view of this fundamental inequality in the relationship, the type of life which a slave had depended largely on his master, the function assigned to him, and the standing which his master allowed him to have.[36]

Cruel masters would subject their slaves to all kinds of suffering while kind and generous masters could make life more endurable for them. As slaveowners relied heavily on their

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[29]Bradley, *Slaves and Masters,* 113ff.

[30]Vogt, *Ancient Slavery*, 129.

[31]Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.44-45.

[32]Plutarch, *Cato* 21.3.

[33]Petronius, *Sat.* 28.

[34]Seneca, *Ep.* 47.4.

[35]Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 14.10. See also Columella, *Rest.* 1.8. 17-19. After laying down various ways in which slaves could be treated kindly, Columella adds: "Such justice and consideration on the part of the master contributes greatly to the increase of his estate."

[36]Bradley, *Slavery and Society*, 89.

slaves, they generally treated them in such a way so as not to affect adversely their economic interests. Xenophon recorded that the master would take steps to bring back a runaway slave or call in doctors to prevent a sick slave from dying.[37] Dio Chrysostom argued that it was to the master's advantage that he should keep his slaves alive and well.[38]

But there were also slaveowners who treated their slaves harshly. Evidence of undue cruelty, abuse and exploitation by slave owners can be found in first century literature. Seneca recounted the example of Vedius Pollio who ordered his slave to be thrown into a fish-pond to be eaten by huge lampreys when he broke a crystal cup.[39] Other harsh masters hit their slaves, kicked them and even gouged out their eyes.[40] Emperors were particularly cruel in their treatment of slaves. When one of his slaves stole a strip of silver from the couches at a public banquet, Caligula ordered that "his hands be cut off and hung from his neck upon his breast, and that he then be led about among the guests preceded by a placard giving the reason for his punishment."[41]

Another example of cruelty to slaves is the non-recognition of their marriage, and the prevention of slaves from forming lasting relationships. When Ischomachus showed the layout of his house to his new wife, he led her to the women's quarters, which were separated by a bolted door from the men's rooms, so that "the servants may not breed without our leave."[42]

However this was not the case when slaves had good masters, who allowed them to have normal family relations. In his study of 115 funerary inscriptions for slaves in Asia Minor, Martin finds that 68 percent of the known providers of funeral epitaphs for slaves were family members.[43]

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[37]Xenophon, *Mem.* 2.10.

[38]Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 14.10.

[39]Seneca, *Ira* 3.40.

[40]T. Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery* (London: Croom Helm 1981) 180.

[41]Suetonius, *Calig.* 32.2. See also Suetonius, *Ner.* 35.5.

[42]Xenophon, *Oec.* 9.5.

[43]Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 5. Of the 115 inscriptions, 30 give no indication of any familial relationship. The rest can be categorised as follows: a) those mentioning only husband and wife; b) those mentioning husband, wife and at least one child; c) those mentioning members of extended families, e.g. persons related by marriage or blood; d) those mentioning nonrelated persons along with the slave's family. However Martin cautions that "these studies of inscriptions must not be pressed too far. They do not prove that slaves enjoyed wonderfully secure and happy home lives within the context of the nuclear family. Nor do they prove that the majority of slaves were able to maintain even a minimal family structure." (Martin, *Slavery as*

A slave's function also determined the type of life he or she would have. Slaves who performed certain tasks like nurses, tutors and physicians, looking after their masters when they were babies, children and patients often developed relationships of intimacy and trust with their masters.[44] Those who acted as their masters' agents in financial affairs, like banking and trading, must have gained some measure of trust from their masters. Slaves in these positions of trust were treated more like persons and not as mere chattels. On their death, their masters would often erect tombstones for them, and wrote testimonies in memorial to them.[45]

Other slaves might enjoy good standing with their masters because they had become indispensable to them in the services they performed. One such example is Tiro, Cicero's slave.[46] So appreciative was Cicero for his slave's services that when Tiro was "very seriously ill," he sent him away for convalescence.[47]

However slaves who were in trusted positions or who enjoyed good standing with their masters formed only a small part of the servile population. The majority were lowly menial household slaves, who would not have any tombstone or memorial erected to attest to their existence. For them, the kind of life they had depended to a large extent on whether they had a good or bad master.

The type of life a slave had also depended on whether his master considered him to be a good or a bad slave. Slaveowners used a very narrow criterion to judge the actions of their slaves. They were either good or bad. When they met their masters' standard of complete submission, they were good and deserved a reward; when they did not, they were bad and deserved punishment.[48] According to Xenophon, a good master "is ready to reward good work well carried out by the servants, and does not shrink from punishing carelessness as it

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Salvation, 6).

[44]Vogt, *Ancient Slavery*, 103-121.

[45]These are mainly for trusted stewards, nurses and physicians: Horsley, *New Documents*, 2 (1982) 52.

[46]Cicero, *Fam.* 16.4.3. See also 16.16.2.

[47]Cicero, *Fam.* 16.1.2; 10.1.

[48]Bradley, *Slavery and Society*, 123. Gaius defines a good slave as one who is loyal, industrious, diligent and thrifty, and a bad slave as one who is fickle, wanton, slothful, sluggish, idle, tardy, and a wastrel: Gaius, *Digest* 21.1.18.

deserves."[49] That slaves lived their lives under this principle is reflected by the slave characters in Plautus's plays. Although these plays are not based on historical facts, Plautus's characters reflected the reality of everyday life in ancient society.

In *Menaechmi*, Messenio the slave describes the good and the bad slave, and their respective rewards.[50] A good slave looks after his master's business, and watches it in his master's absence just as diligently as if he were present. On the other hand, a bad slave is good-for-nothing, lazy, and rascally and is rewarded by "whippings, shackles, work in the mill, famine, freezing stiff." Messenio himself is afraid of these kinds of punishment, and has made up his mind to lead a good life rather than a bad one. For that reason, he chooses to obey his master's orders, and he looks forward to the day when his master will reward him for his service. This same view is also voiced by other slaves in Plautus's plays.[51]

In order to keep slaves in total submission to them, slave owners meted out punishment when their slaves were disobedient. They would discipline errant slaves by flogging them, or by sending them away or selling them.[52] There were some masters who dispensed excessively harsh punishment, as in the case of Vedius Pollio mentioned above. Slaves did not have any recourse to justice against cruelty and abuse by their owners except for that which was provided by law.

Some legislation was passed to alleviate the harsh and cruel treatment of slaves. The edict of Claudius declared that sick slaves who had been abandoned by their owners on the island of Aesculapius would be set free.[53] Another law dating from around 61 CE, the *Lex Petronia*, prohibited owners from exposing their slaves to fight with wild beasts without permission from the competent magistrate; approval was given only when very bad conduct was proven.[54] However, Bradley has rightly pointed out the "significant dichotomy" between the potential

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[49]Xenophon, *Oec.* 12.19. See also 7.41 and 9.15.

[50]Plautus, *Men.* 966ff.

[51]See, for example, Grispus in *Rud.* 918ff, Strobilus in *Aul.* 587ff, Phaniscus in *Mostel.* 859ff, Harpax in *Pseud.* 1103ff.

[52]Plutarch, *Cato* 21.3. Slaves were flogged for minor offences (Juvenal, *Sat.* 14.20ff). They were punished when their mistress was unhappy, for example, when "the husband has turned his back upon his wife at night" (Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.47ff).

[53]Suetonius, *Claud.* 5.25.

[54]S.S. Bartchy, *ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ: First-century Slavery and I Corinthians 7:21* (Missoula: SBL, 1973) 71. See Buckland, *Roman Law* 36-37.

of relief provided by these legal means and the realisation of the potential by slaves who were completely under the control of their cruel masters.[55]

Thus various factors affected the kind of life a slave had in Graeco-Roman society. But one fact is plain. As a slave, his life's work was to submit to his master's orders. Disobedience brought punishment. The only alternative to this kind of life was to resist.

2) Means of Resistance by Slaves

Slaves who found their lives intolerable when subjected to harsh and cruel treatment from their masters did not usually resort to the law. In desperation they would resort to other means of resistance against their masters in order to seek a way of escape. Their desperation was underlined by Seneca's words: "How many slaves a master's anger has driven to flight, how many to death!"[56]

However it was not only slaves of cruel masters who resisted. According to Pliny, no master could feel safe just because he was kind and considerate. After his account of the brutal murder of Larcius Macedo by his slaves, Pliny commented:

> Thus you see to what indignities, outrages, and dangers we are exposed. Nor is lenity and good treatment any security from the villainies of your servants; for it is malice, and not reflection that arms such ruffians against their masters.[57]

Xenophon stated that he had not encountered a bad master with good servants, but he had come across a good master with bad servants.[58]

a) Slave Revolt

One means of resistance was to stage a revolt against the owner. However, slave rebellions were rare. There were only a few major slave revolts, all taking place within the relatively short period between 140 BCE and 70 BCE.[59] These revolts were not motivated by a desire

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[55]Bradley, *Slaves and Masters*, 126.

[56]Seneca, *Ira* 3.5.4.

[57]Pliny, *Ep.* 3.14.

[58]Xenophon, *Oec.* 12.19.

[59]Vogt, *Ancient Slavery*, 39ff; Bradley, *Slaves and Masters*, 145-146. Tacitus recorded two accounts of smaller slave uprising in Pontus: *Hist.* 2.8-9; 3.47-48.

to abolish the social institution of slavery.[60] Rather they were efforts by slaves to escape from their cruel masters.[61]

b) Murder

Some slaves resorted to murdering their owners. That such a threat was not lightly dismissed by the owners was evidenced by the fact that citizens acted as unpaid bodyguards for one another against slaves, to prevent any citizen from dying a violent death.[62] As noted above, Pliny recounts the horrible death of ex-Praetor Larcius Macedo, an insolent and brutal master, at the hands of his slaves in 108 CE.[63] Another example is the murder of city prefect L. Pedanius Secundus in 61 CE, recorded by Tacitus.[64] Laws were passed to protect slave owners against the murderous intentions of their slaves. A Senate Recommendation of 10 CE declared that if an owner was killed, all the slaves within earshot at the time had to be interrogated under torture and executed.[65]

c) Suicide

Other slaves resorted to killing themselves to escape their harsh life under their masters. Attempts at suicide appeared to be common, for when a slave was sold, the seller was obliged under law to declare whether the slave had tried to kill himself. According to Seneca,

> one hangs himself before the door of his mistress; another hurls himself from the house-top that he may no longer be compelled to bear the taunts of a bad-tempered master; a third, to save himself from arrest after running away, drives a sword into his vitals.[66]

Cato's slave killed himself rather than face his master's discipline for his wrongdoing.[67]

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[60]Bartchy, *First-Century Slavery*, 63ff.

[61]See Vogt, *Ancient Slavery*, 41ff for social and political reasons for the slave revolts.

[62]Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 188.

[63]Pliny, *Epistles* III.14. It must be noted that on this occasion there were also some trusted slaves, who brought him out of the bath and raised the alarm.

[64]Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.42.3

[65]Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 169. See also Tacitus, *Annals* 13.32.1; 14.42-45.

[66]Seneca, *Ep.* 4.4.

[67]Plutarch, *Cato* 10.5.

d) Sabotage

A more subtle means of resistance was manifest when slaves became idle or produced shoddy work. This was tantamount to a deliberate sabotage of their masters' property and economic interests.[68] Some stole from their masters or caused damage to their masters' property.[69] Others were rude or disrespectful and answered back.[70]

e) Running Away

The commonest means of resistance against masters was to run away from them. According to Seneca, slaves would take advantage of their masters' absorption in business as an opportunity to run away.[71] Cicero's slave, Dionysius, stole a lot of books from the library which was under his charge, and ran away for fear of punishment.[72] In the NT we have the example of Philemon's slave who ran away.

There were legal provisions relating to runaway slaves.[73] The slave's intention to run away was crucial in determining whether he was a runaway, and there were carefully defined procedures on the recovery of runaway slaves.[74] In principle, running away was a very serious crime against property. To the master, the runaway slave represented an economic loss, and he would do all in his power to recover his property.[75] He would put up a reward for the return of the slave. Often he would seek the help of powerful political figures (on the basis of friendship) to procure the recovery of their runaway slaves.[76] To deter a slave from repeatedly absconding, the owner would brand his forehead or make him wear a collar stating whose property he was.[77]

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[68]Bradley, *Slavery and Society*, 115-117; Llewelyn & Horsley, *New Documents,* 6 (1992) 57

[69]Columella, *Rest.* 1.7.6-7; Cato, *Rest.* 67.

[70]Seneca, *Ira* 3.24.

[71]Seneca, *Ep.* 107.1, 5.

[72]Cicero, *Fam.* 13.77.3.

[73]Buckland, *Roman Law*, 267-274.

[74]Buckland, *Roman Law*, 267.

[75]The owner had to declare in the bill of sale whether the slave was inclined to run away: Buckland, *Roman Law*, 55.

[76]Cicero, *Fam.* 13.77. See also Llewelyn & Kearsley, *New Documents* 6 (1992) 57.

[77]Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 194.

Slaves took great risks when they ran away from their masters.[78] They knew that when captured, they faced certain punishment. But they did so in the hope that they would find freedom or a place of refuge. Runaway slaves could seek refuge in a number of places. A runaway slave could appeal to a god in a temple or a shrine, or a statue of the emperor, or a person of social standing to advocate his cause.[79] Here he was safe until he found for himself a new master, whether human or divine.

In painting this broad picture of a slave's life in the ancient world, we have seen something of the "enormous diversity and variability" of slavery which Bradley mentions.[80] There were good masters and bad masters. There were also good slaves and bad slaves. But what is undisputed is that a slave's life was completely in the hands of his master, who expected total submission from him. From the master's perspective, any form of disobedience and resistance was insubordination, and deserved punishment. For the slaves, however, there was often no recourse against their masters' harsh treatment, and resistance against their masters was an attempt to relieve from hardship, or "an act of self-preservation and survival."[81]

3) The Effect of Conversion on the Master-Slave Relationship

This brief picture of the master-slave relationship in Graeco-Roman society will help us to appreciate more fully the slave's dilemma upon conversion.[82] As the slave was under the total control of his master, his new allegiance to Jesus Christ as his κύριος would have significant implications for his relationship with his master. Below are a few specific areas in which Christian slaves would find themselves in a dilemma in ~~his relationship with his~~ their relationships with their non-Christian master.

First, for a slave to be under his master's control meant that his religious life was subject

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[78]Bradley, *Slavery and Society*, 126-129.

[79]B.M. Rapske, "The Prisoner Paul in the Eyes of Onesimus," *NTS* 37 (1991) 187-203: Rapske propounds the view that if fear of discovery had prompted his flight, then Onesimus might well have sought Paul's assistance to intercede as an *amicus domini* on his behalf. See also J.D.M. Derrett, "The Function of the Epistle to Philemon," *ZNW* 79 (1988) 63-91: He argues that Paul's letter to Philemon was a public manifesto to absolve the church of the suspicion that it acted as an asylum for slaves.

[80]Bradley, *Slavery and Society*, 4.

[81]Bradley, *Slavery and Society*, 109.

[82]For the effect of a slave's conversion on his relationship with his Christian master, see J.M.G. Barclay, "Paul, Philemon and the Dilemma of Christian Slave-Ownership," *NTS* 37 (1991) 161-186.

to his master's authority.[83] Both Columella and Cato reflect this in their list of requirements for the appointment of a slave as overseer of his master's farm. According to Columella, the slave "shall offer no sacrifice except by direction of the master."[84] Cato put it this way: "He must not get involved in any religious activities except those at the crossroads during the festival of the Compitalia, and those at the household hearth."[85]

Although Columella and Cato refer to rural slaves, the requirement that a slave's religious life and activities come under the control of his master applied to all slaves. As members of their master's household, they were expected to participate in the worship of his household gods. The οἶκος possessed a distinct religious identity through the performance of the domestic cult focused on the home.[86] This was a very important activity for all members of the household, including slaves, for the well being of the οἶκος depended on the proper worship of household gods.[87] Both Greek and Roman households practised worship of household gods.[88]

A slave encountered the household gods from the very moment he entered his master's house. His entry into the οἶκος would have been marked by a religious ceremony. This ceremony, which was also used for the welcome of new wives into the household, was centred around the familial hearth.[89] In this way the new slave came under the protection of the household gods.

Once in the household, the slave was expected to participate in the practice of domestic cult. In both Greek and Roman households, the practice of domestic cult was centred around

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[83]C. Osiek & D.L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997) 81-82.

[84]Columella, *Rest.* 1.8.6.

[85]Cato, *Rest.* 5. A similar requirement was stipulated for the overseer's wife, who was also the housekeeper: "She must not engage in religious worship herself or get others to engage in it for her without the orders of the master and mistress ... On the Kalends, Ides, and Nones, and whenever a holy day comes, she must hang a garland over the hearth, and on those days pray to the household gods as opportunity offers." (Cato, *Rest.* 143.2).

[86]L.B. Zaidman & P.S. Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City* (ET: Cambridge: CUP, 1992) 80.

[87]See chapter 7 for more details on household gods.

[88]M.P. Nilsson, "Roman and Greek Domestic Cult," *Opuscula Selecta* III.271-285.

[89]D.G. Rice and J.E. Stambaugh, *Sources for the Study of Greek Religion* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979) 144; Zaidman & Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*, 69. For the ceremony welcoming new wives, see p. 178 below.

the familial hearth.[90] Meals were taken around the hearth, and offerings were made. Slaves were included in these meals.[91]

The main gods of the household were the *Lares*, the *Genius* and the *Penates*. The *Lares* were the deified spirits of dead ancestors of the household, and every household had a Lararium or shrine where offerings could be made to them.[92] According to Cicero, the worship of the *Lares*, which were handed down by the ancestors, established in sight of farm and homestead, and shared by slaves as well as masters, must not be rejected.[93]

The *Penates* were the gods that watched over the store-house or larder, which was situated behind the hearth.[94] Honouring the *Penates* would ensure sufficient food each day for the household. The *Genius* was "the guiding numen of the family, its procreative force, and especially the living spirit of the paterfamilias."[95]

Everyone in the household, including the slaves and the freedmen, was involved in the worship of the *Lares* and the *Genius* of the paterfamilias.[96] They took oaths by the *genius* of the master of the household. The festival of the *genius*, which was the birthday of the paterfamilias, was celebrated by the whole household, including slaves.

Slaves were also expected to participate in some religious festivals. One of these was the *Compitalia*, which marked the end of each agricultural year. In the country, this was celebrated at the crossroads of farms, where a shrine was erected at the crossroads, open in all four directions. Four small altars were placed around it. At the *Compitalia*, the farmers would hang up a plough on the shrine and also a woollen doll for every free person in the household and a woollen ball for every slave. Sacrifice was made on the following day, which

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[90]Rice & Stambaugh, *Sources for the Study of Greek Religion*, 143. The Greek name was Hestia while for the Romans it was Vesta.

[91]Ovid, *Fast.* 6.295ff; Columella, *Rest.* 11.1.19; Horace, *Epod.* 2.40ff.

[92]In Trimalchio's house, in a corner of the hall was a large cupboard containing a tiny shrine, wherein were silver house-gods: Petronius, *Sat.* 29.

[93]Cicero, *Leg.* 2.27. See also Cicero, *Leg.* 2.19, 55; *Rep.* 5.7.

[94]Cicero, *Rep.* 5.7.

[95]*OCD* 630; D.G. Orr, "Roman Domestic Religion: The Evidence of the Household Shrine," *ANRW* II.16.2.1570.

[96]Nilsson, "Roman and Greek Domestic Cult," 271-285.

was a holiday for slaves.[97]

Compitalia was also celebrated annually in the city, where chapels were erected at cross-roads. Dionysius of Halicarnassus described the celebration, which was practised in his day.[98] Each family contributed towards the sacrifices, which were made at the shrines at the cross-roads. The sacrifices were performed, not by free men, but by slaves. On this day, all marks of servitude were removed, and slaves celebrated this festival alongside their masters.[99] In Dionysius's view, the removal of the marks of servitude would make slaves "more agreeable to their masters, and make them less sensible of the severity of their condition." For this reason, masters would expect their slaves to participate in this festival.

However Christian slaves would not be able to participate in the worship of household gods and in festivals like *Compitalia*, for they would regard it as idolatry in the eyes of their God. A conflict situation would inevitably arise. Failure to participate in domestic worship would be construed as insubordination, and the Christian slave would be liable for punishment.

The second area in which Christian slaves were liable to come into conflict with their non-Christian masters was their need for permission to join a *collegium* for their religious activities. The *collegia* played an important role in their lives, for they combined the functions of religious congregation, social club, craft-guild and funeral society. Slaveowners would probably allow their slaves to join *collegia domestica* which comprised slaves and freedmen within the household.[100] However it might be a different matter when the collegium happened to be an assembly of Christians. Conflict would arise in the event that the master refused to grant leave to his slave to join the Christian community.

Thirdly, Christian slaves would be reluctant to commit any wrongdoing which his master ordered him to do. While Seneca was of the view that slaves could not be compelled to carry out orders that were hostile to the state or to lend their hands to any crime, there were instances when slaves had been required by their masters to assist them in wrongdoing.[101] Appian told of the slave who was bribed with money and the promise of freedom to go to

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[97]Varro, *Ling.* 6.25; Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.7.35, 37. See also R.M. Ogilvie, *The Romans and Their Gods* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969) 74.

[98]Dionysius Halicarnassus, *Ant. Rom.* 4.14.3-4.

[99]*Ant. Rom.* 4.14.4.

[100]Kloppenborg, "Collegia and *Thiasoi*," 23.

[101]Seneca, *Ben.* 20.2.

Sulla as a deserter in order to assassinate him.[102] Nero ordered the slaves of Rufius Crispius to drown him while he was fishing.[103] Lipo tried to force his slaves to assist him in his suicide.[104]

In view of the commonly held view that slaves tended to do wicked deeds, slaveowners would see no reason why they should not order their slaves to do wrong on their behalf. It might be the case that some slaves would obey their masters very willingly in these situations. However Christian slaves would not be numbered among them, and would find themselves in a dilemma.

The above shows the dilemma of a Christian slave serving a non-Christian master. If he chose to obey his heavenly Lord rather than his earthly master, his master would construe his failure to obey as tantamount to insubordination, and would punish him.[105] Thus to remain within the household under the absolute power of a non-Christian master might entail unjust suffering. Some Christian slaves might have been tempted to retaliate or resist their non-Christian masters and escape from such suffering. Running away was the commonest option. But such resistance would be held to justify punishment at their masters' hands. One of Aesop's stories illustrates the Christian slave's dilemma very well. Aesop met a slave who was running away from his cruel master because he had suffered "a surplus of blows and a shortage of rations", and other hardship. After listening to his long list of grievances, Aesop replied:

> Now then, listen', said Aesop, 'these are the hardships that you suffer, according to your account, when you have done no wrong; what if you commit an offence? What do you think you will suffer then?' By such advice the man was deterred from running away.[106]

What advice had Peter to give to Christian slaves in such a dilemma? He addresses them in 2:18-25.

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[102]Appian, *Mith.* 59.

[103]Suetonius, *Ner.* 35.5.

[104]Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.31.1-2.

[105]Bradley describes the dilemma very succinctly: "Their choice lay between a violent act committed out of dutifulness but which might have entailed moral or physical problems on the one hand, and a refusal to act which, automatically exposed them on the other hand to the owner's rage and reprisal": *Slaves and Masters*, 135.

[106]Quoted in Bradley, *Slavery and Society*, 128.

4) Peter's Exhortation: 2:18-20

Peter's exhortation to Christian slaves in 2:18-25 must be seen as an expansion of his injunction in 2:12 to live good lives and to do good in order that non-Christians may see Christians' good deeds and glorify God. In their relationship with their non-Christian masters, Christian slaves must show themselves to be good slaves so that their pagan masters will recognise this and commend them.

a) **Submission to Masters**

In 2:18 Peter begins by instructing Christian slaves to submit themselves to their masters. In encouraging Christian slaves to submit to their masters, to the good and even to the harsh (ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς σκολιοῖς), Peter is urging them to be good slaves: for submission to the master was the mark of a good slave in the ancient world.[107] He is discouraging them from resisting their masters, who would judge any resistance to be insubordination and will punish the bad slave accordingly.

b) "Do Good"

Peter's exhortation to Christian slaves to be good slaves continues in 2:19-20 when he turns to the matter of unjust suffering. Some commentators associate this unjust suffering with the reference to harsh masters of 2:18, for example, van Unnik, who thinks that Peter is concerned with the suffering of the slaves under harsh masters, and not with masters in general.[108] Michaels takes a similar view.[109]

However this view fails to take into account the dilemma Christian slaves faced upon their conversion when they were not able to obey their masters in matters incompatible with their newfound allegiance to Jesus Christ. Such disobedience would be construed by all masters as insubordination, whether harsh or good. Both bad and good slaveowners would punish acts of disobedience. From their point of view, such punishment would be just. However from the

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[107]Prostmeier thinks that since submission was normal in ancient society, 2:18b must have a definite function. He argues that it serves as a model for all Christians who are suffering: *Handlungsmodelle*, 406-410. However Prostmeier has not taken seriously the special situation of slaves in Graeco-Roman society, and the fact that Peter is addressing them specifically.

[108]Van Unnik, "The Teaching of Good Works in 1 Peter," 92.

[109]Michaels, 139-140.

Christian slaves' perspective, such punishment was unjust suffering.

The unjust suffering which Christian slaves are encouraged to bear refers primarily to suffering on account of their Christian faith. Peter's use of διὰ συνείδησιν θεοῦ reinforces this.[110] A Christian's "consciousness" or "awareness" of God causes him to act in a certain way. Goppelt interprets the phrase to mean "a conscience directed toward God or bound to him."[111]

Most commentators link διὰ συνείδησιν θεοῦ to the issue of bearing unjust suffering, in that one's consciousness of God enables one to bear up with unjust suffering.[112] Goppelt, however, seems correct in arguing that "the causal διὰ here suggests that the expression should be connected to the context in the sense of cause and not only of enabling."[113] On this view Peter has in mind cases where the Christian slave's awareness of God leads him to disobey his master in matters which are incompatible with his newfound allegiance to God, and where, consequently he has to suffer unjustly.

However Peter is not advocating mere passive endurance of suffering. He is concerned that Christian slaves should endure suffering for the right reason. Their suffering must come from doing good, and not from doing wrong. Everyone accepted that a slave who had done wrong deserved punishment from his master. There was no credit in enduring such suffering. But if a Christian slave had done good and endured suffering, he would show himself to be a good slave in the eyes of his non-Christian master. There was not only credit in the sight of man for doing good, but also with God. This is the thrust of Peter's injunction in 2:19-20, and he uses rhetoric to stress his point.

Verses 19 and 20 form a rhetorical unit, beginning with τοῦτο γὰρ χάρις in 2:19 and ending with τοῦτο χάρις παρὰ θεῷ in 2:20b. Within this unit Peter poses a rhetorical question: ποῖον γὰρ κλέος εἰ ἁμαρτάνοντες καὶ κολαφιζόμενοι ὑπομενεῖτε; (20a). Michaels rightly

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[110]In Greek literature, συνείδησις refers to "consciousness" or "awareness" of something or of oneself, both in the intellectual and moral sense: *TDNT* VII:898-919. When used in the moral sense, it refers to conscience. In the NT συνείδησις is used for the way Christians and non-Christians judge their previous conduct (Rom. 2:15; 2 Cor. 1:12; 4:2;5:11), and for the Christian's religious and moral decision-making capacity (1 Cor. 8:7-13; Rom. 13:5). It is also used to denote a Christian's relationship to God and neighbour, the aim being to have a "good conscience" (Acts 23:1; 1 Tim. 1:5, 19; 1 Pet. 3:16, 21).

[111]Goppelt, 198.

[112]See again Michaels, 140.

[113]Goppelt, 197.

sees this rhetorical question as an allusion to Jesus' thrice-repeated question in Luke 6:32-34: ποία ὑμῖν χάρις;[114] The subject matter is not identical, but Michaels highlights similarities between the two passages. Just as Jesus' question demands a negative response, the answer to Peter's question in 2:20a must also be negative. The negative response to the rhetorical questions in Luke 6:32-34 prepares the ground for the positive command that follows, "Love your enemies, and do good, and lend money without expecting anything in return" (Luke 6:35). Similarly, Peter follows on with a positive exhortation to his readers to do good and endure unjust suffering (2:20b).

However Michaels fails to note another point of similarity. If Peter was thinking of Jesus' sayings in Luke 6:32-35 in 2:19-20, then he must also have recalled the words immediately following ποία ὑμῖν χάρις: the phrase καὶ οἱ ἁμαρτωλοὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ποιοῦσιν must also have echoed in Peter's mind, although he has omitted it in 2:20. Even "sinners" or pagan slaves knew that when they had done wrong, they would receive a beating, and there was no credit in this. Thus Peter appealed to common knowledge in Graeco-Roman society that there was no κλέος when a slave received a beating for doing wrong.

This is reinforced by Peter's use of κλέος, a word which is used only here in the NT, and twice in the LXX (Job 28:22; 30:8). It was used more commonly in classical Greek to mean "good report, fame, glory".[115] κλέος was often used in the context of heroic deeds being spread abroad to people around.[116] A similar meaning is found in Josephus, when speaking of Claudius and the immense reputation of his brother Germanicus.[117] Elsewhere Josephus attributes κλέος to God.[118] In early Christian writings, κλέος is used only twice by Clement, who gave it a theological meaning.[119] According to Clement, those who do the will of God will win great glory (κλέος) in Christ.[120]

In 2:20a, Peter is not using κλέος in its theological sense. The context of Peter's rhetorical

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[114]Michaels, 135, 139-140.

[115]Liddell & Scott, 958.

[116]Homer, *Il.* 4.197; v.3; *Od.* 1.344; Herodotus 9.78; 12.220.

[117]Josephus, *Ant.* 19.223.

[118]Josephus, *Ant.* 4.105, 115.

[119]I Clem. 5:6.

[120]I Clem. 54:3.

question in verse 20a shows that he is using κλέος in the secular sense, which his readers and non-Christians would easily have understood. No-one was likely to give credit to a slave who endured suffering when he fully deserved his master's punishment for wrongdoing.

Wrongdoing in this context would refer to any act of insubordination, and this would include the various means of resistance slaves used against their masters. Christian slaves, who suffered unjustly from their non-Christian masters, might have been tempted to escape such unjust suffering by resorting to the various ways of resistance outlined above. In particular, running away would have been an attractive option. However these were not options open to Christian slaves, for they would be tantamount to doing wrong in the eyes of their masters, and any punishment inflicted upon them would be held to be justified.[121] Plutarch's description of the punishment of a slave illustrates this point well:

> And it was a severe punishment for a slave who had committed a fault, if he was obliged to take the piece of wood with which they prop up the pole of a waggon, and carry it through the neighbourhood. For he who has been seen undergoing this punishment no longer has any credit in his own or neighbouring households.[122]

If there was no credit to a slave for enduring a beating for wrongdoing, there is evidence in the ancient world to suggest that the converse was true: that is, there was credit and praise for slaves who did good. Peter appeals to this.

To do good in the face of unjust suffering was highly commendable in Graeco-Roman society. This was particularly so where slaves were concerned. We have seen earlier that most slaveowners expected their slaves to have a tendency to commit wicked deeds.[123] Thus it was far more praiseworthy for slaves to do good because it was rare.[124] Their good works could be recognised by their masters, who would reward them accordingly.[125] Peter hopes that the same would apply to Christian slaves.

What did it mean for Christian slaves to do good, and how was doing good different from the duties which they had to perform? Van Unnik is right when he says that ἀγαθοποιοῦντες

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[121]See *The Achievements of Augustus*, 4.25, cited in Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 67.

[122]Plutarch, *Coriolanus* 21.5. Although Plutarch does not use the word κλέος, the meaning is similar.

[123]See p. 143 above.

[124]Seneca, *Ben.* 3.19.4.

[125]Xenophon, *Oec.* 7.19; 7.41; 9.15.

implies more than "doing one's duty."[126] In his view, ἀγαθοποιοῦντες is parallel with διὰ συνείδησιν θεοῦ, i.e. their doing good arrises out of compliance with the will of God. However this does not tell us what form doing good would take.

Seneca's treatise on *Benefits* helps us to understand the meaning of doing good in the context of the master-slave relationship in the Graeco-Roman world.[127] This treatise is particularly helpful to us because it was written sometime between 56 and 62 CE, shortly before 1 Peter. Seneca's views are those of an enlightened Roman slaveowner. Seneca encourages very high standards for the master-slave relationship. In chapter 4, we have seen that good works in I Peter correspond to the highest standard of a decent man or woman in the ancient world. Thus Seneca's views would be a good indication of the high standards which Peter was urging Christian slaves to aspire to in their relationship with their non-Christian masters.

Seneca examines the question whether it is possible for a slave to confer a benefit or to do good to his master.[128] He insists that it is possible. First, Seneca asserts that it is not one's status that matters but one's intention when conferring the benefit or doing good. If a man can give benefit to his king, and a soldier can give benefit to his general, then a slave can also do good to his master.

Secondly, Seneca distinguishes between a slave's services and the benefits he confers on his master. When the slave does only that which is ordinarily required of a slave, he has simply performed services for his master. All that a slave does in excess of his prescribed duties as a slave, not from obedience to authority, but from his own desire, counts as a benefit, provided that it is significant enough to go by that name if another person were supplying it.[129] Seneca illustrates the distinction in the following way:

> If I show to you one who fights for the safety of his master without any regard for his own, and, pierced with wounds, pours forth the last drops of his life-blood drawn from his very vitals, who, in order to provide time for his master to escape, seeks to give him

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[126]Van Unnik, "The Teaching of Good Works in 1 Peter," 93.

[127]It is perhaps pertinent to note that while van Unnik refers to Seneca's treatise in an earlier part of his article, he does not refer to it in his discussion of master-slave relationship.

[128]Seneca, *Ben.* 3.18-28; see also the discussion in Vogt, *Ancient Slavery*, 138ff..

[129]The crucial test is, "What if he had refused?" According to Seneca, when a slave "has bestowed something that he had a right to refuse to bestow, the fact that he was willing deserves to be praised" (*Ben.* 3.22.2).

> a respite at the cost of his own life, will you deny that this man has bestowed a benefit simply because he is a slave? If I show to you one who, refusing to betray to a tyrant the secrets of his master, was bribed by no promises, terrified by no threats, overcome by no tortures, and, as far as he was able, confounded the suspicions of his questioner, and paid the penalty of good faith with his life, will you deny that this man bestowed a benefit on his master simply because he was his slave?[130]

According to Seneca, slaves who bestow benefit upon their masters deserve praise:

> What a hero! - to wish to die in place of a master in times when not to wish a master to die was a rare show of loyalty; to be found kind when the state was cruel, faithful when it was treacherous; to covet death as a reward for loyalty in the face of the huge rewards that are offered for disloyalty![131]

Seneca is not merely using hypothetical examples to reinforce his rhetoric. He supports his argument with concrete examples. He cites the case of a slave, who dressed himself in his master's clothes and presented himself to the soldiers who were searching for his master during the Civil War (43 BCE). In doing this, he risked his life.[132]

Another slave saved his master through his quick wit, which earned him praise. Rufus, a man of senatorial rank, offended emperor Augustus by declaring publicly his wish that the emperor would not return safe from his journey, and added that "all the bulls and the calves wished the same thing." At the break of day, his slave told him what he had said while he was drunk the previous night, and urged him to plead his case in front of Caesar before others who had heard him brought charges against him. Rufus immediately followed his slave's advice, and sought Caesar's pardon. This Caesar magnanimously gave. Seneca comments: "Everyone who hears of this incident must necessarily praise Caesar but the first to be praised will be the slave."[133]

Seneca was not alone in applauding the good deeds of slaves. Examples of slaves doing good to their masters were well-known in the ancient world, and formed the subject of many books. Appian (95-165 CE), who records slaves' good deeds in *History of the Civil Wars* (4.13.49-51.224), writes, "There is a great deal of material here, and many Romans have recorded it in their own way in many books." He records various examples of slaves who were

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[130]Seneca, *Ben.* 3.19.2-3.

[131]Seneca, *Ben.* 3.25.

[132]Seneca, *Ben.* 3.25. See also *Ben.* 3.23 for another example involving two slaves, who hid their mistress until danger was over.

[133]Seneca, *Ben.* 3.27. In another example, Paulus's slave saved his master from punishment for offending the emperor Tiberius Caesar: *Ben.* 3.26.1-2.

willing to die in their master's place. When soldiers burst into the country place of Appius, his slave put on his master's clothes and quickly threw himself on his bed, and "voluntarily died for his master, who was standing beside him dressed as a slave."[134] When soldiers came to the house of Menenius, one of his slaves got into his master's litter, and allowed himself to be killed on his master's behalf. His master was enabled to escape to Sicily.[135]

Dio Cassius also documents similar acts of good deeds by slaves.[136] He concedes that these were perhaps instances of slaves repaying their masters for favours and kindnesses previously received. However he cites the case of a branded runaway slave who saved his master from grave danger when it would have been so easy to betray the one by whose hands he was branded.[137] Appian records the same story in greater detail. When Restio fled from his enemies, he was followed by a slave who had been branded very lately for bad conduct. This slave found a hiding place for his master in a cave, and procured food for him. The soldiers became suspicious of the slave's movements and followed him to the cave. Realising that his master was in grave danger of discovery, the slave killed an old man who was walking ahead of him. He cut off the old man's head, and told the soldiers, "I have killed Restio, my master, the man who marked me with these scars." The soldiers took the head away, and the slave helped his master to escape.[138] Dio Cassius ends his account with this comment: "... and thus he not only saved his master, but at the same time gained honour for himself."[139]

All the above examples involved slaves voluntarily taking great risks, often at the cost of their very lives, to save their masters. These were situations of great stress when the slave had to make a deliberate decision in favour of his own master and against another power which claimed an overriding allegiance for itself.[140] During times of civil wars slaves were offered freedom as a reward for betraying their masters. Many slaves turned traitors during these times, but there were others who remained faithful and loyal to their masters. Their deeds

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[134]Appian, *Civil Wars* 4.44.

[135]Appian, *Civil Wars* 4.44.

[136]Dio Cassius, *Roman History* xlvii.10.2-3. See also Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.11.16-46.

[137]Dio Cassius, *Roman History* xlvii.10.4-5.

[138]Appian, *Civil Wars* 4.43.

[139]Dio Cassius, *Roman History* xlvii.10.5.

[140]Vogt, *Ancient Slavery*, 132.

were recognised as good and praiseworthy.[141]

A slave's good deeds were not only demonstrated during times of great stress like the civil wars, but also in ordinary everyday life when the slave worked hard and lived a good life. Slaveowners often erected epitaphs attesting to their slaves' good works. Although slaveowners often erected these epitaphs to show themselves as kind masters, and the high praise bestowed must be to some extent discounted, nevertheless these inscriptions indicate what slaveowners regarded as characteristic of good slaves.[142]

> An epitaph ascribed to the first century CE found in Bithynia reads as follows:
>
> In this place Chrestos buried aged Italos; he wept for his faithful slave when he died. In return for (Italos') good (ἀγαθοῦ) life and industrious servitude (Chrestos) fulfilled these sacred rites for him as a favour.[143]

Another epitaph reads: "This is the grave of Nyse, who was orderly and hard-working."[144]

Cicero's recommendation of his former slave to his friend also gives us some idea of what slaveowners considered the attributes of a good slave were. He writes:

> I like him for his exceptional conscientiousness and fidelity towards his former master; moreover he has rendered me personally important services, making himself available to me in the most difficult period of my life, with as much loyalty and goodwill as if I had given him his freedom.[145]

From the above, we see that slaves could on occasions do good to their masters in a way that went beyond the duties they were expected to perform. Their good works included industry and hard work, faithful service, loyalty and goodwill, the willingness to serve their masters in difficult times, and to save them from grave danger, even at the expense of their own lives. People in the ancient world, both masters and slaves, recognised these as good works, which were worthy of commendation.

According to Xenophon, a good master "is ready to reward good work well carried through by the servants."[146] He seems to imply that a bad master would not do so. As noted,

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[141]Virginius, an orator of distinction, told his slaves that they would enjoy "an excellent reputation and good hopes" if they saved him: Appian, *Civil Wars* 4.48.

[142]See Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 4.

[143]Horsley, *New Documents*, 3 (1983) 39. See also *New Documents*, 2 (1982) 52ff.

[144]R. Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1942) 280-285.

[145]Cicero, *Fam.* 13.21.

[146]Xenophon, *Oec.* 12.19.

he states that he has not discovered a bad master with good servants.[147] It would therefore be a remarkable thing when Christian slaves did good to their harsh masters.

However Peter is aware that not all non-Christian masters will commend Christian slaves when they have done good. They may still be subject to unjust suffering. Peter encourages them to continue to do good and to endure suffering. In 2:19, Peter affirms that it is χάρις to suffer unjustly. Here χάρις does not denote that which God gives freely (see 1:10, 13; 3:7; 4:10; 5:5,10,12) but that which God is pleased with. 2:20b expands verse 19 with εἰ ἀγαθοποιοῦντες καὶ πάσχοντες ὑπομενεῖτε, τοῦτο χάρις παρὰ θεῷ. Thus Peter encourages Christian slaves to do good and to endure suffering, for they will find credit in God's sight.

It was not an easy task for Christian slaves to do good and to endure suffering for doing good. Yet there was no other alternative, for to resort to any of the means of resistance against their masters would be construed as wrongdoing. Peter encourages them to remain in the pagan households, and to do good. To reinforce his exhortation, Peter employs a rhetorical device typical of paraenetic instruction. He provides them with an example to follow. In 2:21-25 Peter uses the example of Jesus Christ as the model for Christian slaves to follow, and we now turn to examine this.[148]

5) The Example of Jesus Christ for Christian Slaves: 2:21-25

Writers such as Appian, Dio Cassius and Seneca record many examples of slaves who had done good deeds to help their masters, even to the extent of laying down their lives for their masters. Any of these slaves would have served as an excellent example of a good slave.

Peter, however, presents Jesus Christ as the example for Christian slaves to emulate. While scholars concede that Peter is still addressing household slaves in 2:21-25, they often do not discuss the passage with particular reference to slaves. Instead they quickly turn to apply the example of Jesus Christ to Christians generally. For example, Michaels sees 2:21-25 as ostensibly only for Christian slaves, but in reality addressed to all Christians in Asia Minor,

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[147]Xenophon, *Oec.* 12.19.

[148]Our discussion of 2:21-25 will be confined to Peter's use of the example of Jesus Christ to encourage Christian slaves to do good and to endure suffering. Issues relating to its literary composition or its relationship with Isa. 53 or the theological significance of 2:21-25 in the light of the whole letter or Peter's view of the atonement will not be discussed here.

for which the household slaves are "stand-ins".[149] By ostensibly addressing Christian slaves, "Peter can begin to explore the possibility of widespread suffering for the sake of Christ without seeming to do so."[150]

Achtemeier, too, is concerned with larger Christological issues in 2:21-25, and is of the view that household slaves and wives of non-Christian husbands "serve metaphorically for the status of all Christians who comprise a powerless group within the larger structure of the Roman Empire."[151] Bultmann goes so far as to insist that the use of ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν and the description of Christ's suffering in 2:21-25 have nothing to do with the exhortation of the slaves.[152]

While the example of Christ could also apply to Christians generally, Peter's primary audience in 2:21-25 must not be overlooked. It is with particular reference to Christian slaves and their relationship with non-Christian masters that the example of Jesus Christ can be most fully appreciated. Michaels, Achtemeier and other scholars either ignore or treat highly selectively aspects of the master-slave relationship in Graeco-Roman society. They also disregard the intensity of the conflict and dilemma which Christian slaves will have faced upon conversion. It is in response to this dilemma that Peter uses the rhetorical device of an example to encourage them to do good and to endure suffering for doing good.

Peter's intention to encourage Christian slaves to follow the example of Jesus Christ is evidenced by the choice of his words in 2:21-25. His use of εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ ἐκλήθητε in 2:21, employing the second person and τοῦτο, looks back to 2:19-20, and refers to his injunction to Christian slaves to do good and to endure suffering for doing good. It is to this that Christian slaves had been called.

Although Peter moves away from the second person in 2:22, he returns to it in 2:24c. Scholars like Michaels argue that this omission in 2:22-24b means that Peter is widening his

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[149]Michaels, 152.

[150]Michaels, 152. However there is no need for Peter to discuss the issue of suffering in this surreptitious way. He has already talked about their suffering in 1:6, 2:12 and 2:15, and in 3:13-19 and 4:12-19 he addresses the issue of doing good and suffering. These sections are addressed to all Christians. For a fuller discussion of this issue of doing good and suffering, see chapter 8 below.

[151]P.J. Achtemeier, "Suffering Servant and Suffering Christ in 1 Peter", in A.J.Malherbe and W.A.Meeks (eds.), *The Future of Christology: Essays in honour of Leander E. Keck* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) 177.

[152]R. Bultmann, "Bekenntnis- und Liedfragmente im ersten Petrusbrief", *ConNT* 11 (1947) 1-14.

audience to include Christians generally. According to Michaels, the slaves seem to be out of the picture in verse 23, "for a slave to refrain from insults and threats toward a master is not so much a mark of Christian virtue as a simple necessity for survival."[153] However Michaels has referred to only one aspect of the master-slave relationship in the ancient world. He has failed to consider the different ways which slaves showed their resistance against their masters. Some not only threatened but used force on their masters. Others gave "a cheeky answer or disrespectful look or mutters something which I can't quite hear."[154] These gestures were surely intended to insult their masters. There was a real temptation for slaves to resist their masters. To refrain from insults and threats was a mark of a good slave in the eyes of the slaveowner.

Schutter, on the other hand, argues that Peter's resumption of the second person in 2:24c shows that he has finally arrived at the detail which made the application to slaves complete.[155] He refers to τῷ μώλωπι, a word whose significance slaves would have been quick to realise because they were frequently punished with beatings. Schutter contends that Peter draws an analogy here between the harsh treatment Jesus endured and the harsh treatment that any slave might anticipate, and that it is this close analogy that provides him with the basis to exhort Christian slaves.

Schutter finds a more compelling analogy in 2:24a, where ἐπι τὸ ξύλον refers to Jesus' crucifixion. All slaves knew that crucifixion was a cruel form of execution, and that it was the typical punishment for slaves.[156] It was commonly called "the slaves' death." According to Schutter, the subject of crucifixion is "chiefly responsible for the analogy between Jesus and slaves, because he died 'the slaves' death'."

Having referred to crucifixion in 2:24a, Peter resumes the second person with τῷ μώλωπι ἰάθητε in 2:24c. When read in the context of crucifixion, τῷ μώλωπι connotes the scourging which preceded a crucifixion. Again this was something with which slaves could identify. Thus Schutter concludes that Jesus' identification with slaves in their suffering "could not have been more concrete and complete, short of literally being sold into slavery, so that his example is

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[153]Michaels, 146.

[154]Seneca, *Ira* 3.24.

[155]Schutter, *Hermeneutic and Composition*, 141.

[156]M. Hengel, *The Cross of the Son of God* (ET; London: SCM Press, 1986) 143-155.

binding even upon them."

Schutter is right in the emphasis that he gives to Christian slaves as the primary audience in 2:21-25. The analogy between Jesus' suffering and the suffering of slaves serves to make the example of Christ even more compelling for slaves to follow. There is, however, one other analogy which Schutter fails to point out, and that is the vicarious death of Jesus. Dying for others was a familiar notion in the ancient world. Hengel has collected many examples from ancient literary sources to show that people in the ancient world were familiar with the theme of dying for others out of love, and the notion of a voluntary death as an atoning sacrifice.[157] Slaves themselves had been the subject of praise for their loyalty and courage which had prompted them to die for their masters, as we have seen above.[158] Admittedly, the redemptive effects of Jesus' death are in many ways regarded as unique in 1 Peter, but the act of Jesus dying for others, including those who crucified him, is a compelling example of one who did good and suffered for it. When applied to Christian slaves, it provides them the motivation to do good to their masters, even the harsh ones, and to endure suffering for doing good.

Those scholars who view 2:21-25 as only ostensibly addressing slaves have also disregarded the way in which Peter applies the example of Jesus Christ to Christian slaves in 2:21. He states that Christ himself has suffered for them (ὅτι καὶ χριστὸς ἔπαθεν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν). Some scholars have suggested that ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν refers to the vicarious suffering of Christ, a theme which Peter expands in verses 24 and 25.[159] The use of ὑπὲρ in 3:18 is clearly used in the vicarious sense together with the words περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν. Words like these denoting vicarious suffering are not found in 2:21. Here ὑμῶν looks back to the preceding verses where Peter addresses Christian slaves, and ἔπαθεν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν is amplified by what follows: ὑμῖν ὑπολιμπάνων ὑπογραμμὸν ἵνα ἐπακολουθήσητε τοῖς ἴχνεσιν αὐτοῦ. Christ suffered for Christian slaves, for their benefit, in the sense of leaving them an example to follow.

Peter's use of the example of Christ primarily for Christian slaves in 2:21-25 must no longer be set aside in favour of broader Christological issues. 2:21-25 must be examined in the light of the fact that Christian slaves are Peter's primary audience. Knowing the intensity

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[157]Hengel, *The Cross of the Son of God*, 216-217.

[158]See pp. 161-163.

[159]Goppelt, 199; T.P. Osborne, "Guide Lines for Christian Suffering: A Source-Critical and Theological Study of 1 Peter 2,21-25," *Biblica* 64 (1983) 381-408.

of the dilemma which Christian slaves faced upon conversion, Peter points them to Jesus Christ. What kind of example did Jesus Christ leave for Christian slaves to follow?

The word used for example is ὑπογραμμός, which occurs only here in the NT. Clement of Alexandria uses ὑπογραμμός in the technical sense of a copy-head traced out for children to write over.[160] Plato uses it in the same sense when he describes the faint outline (ὑπογράψαντες γραμμὰς) which writing-masters provided for their pupils to help them write.[161] Again the meaning here is of a model providing sufficient guidelines for learners to follow.

Peter uses antithesis to present Jesus' conduct in suffering as the example for Christian slaves to follow. There are two passive and two active aspects to Jesus' example. In 2:22, Peter quotes from Isaiah 53:9 to show Jesus' innocence from any wrongdoing. Similarly Christian slaves must refrain from any wrongdoing. Verse 23a gives the second passive aspect of Jesus' suffering. He did not retaliate when insulted, and did not threaten when he suffered. In the same way, Christian slaves must not resort to the various means of resistance to which slaves in the ancient world had recourse.

However Jesus did not suffer passively. He entrusted himself to God (2:23b). Christian slaves must follow his example and commit their lives to God.[162] The second active element in Jesus' suffering is that he "bore our sins in his body on the tree" (2:24a). While Jesus' vicarious death is unique, his suffering served as an example to Christian slaves to do good to their masters, whether good or bad, even to the extent of giving their lives for them. We have seen that the concept of vicarious suffering, even carried out by slaves for the benefit of their masters, was familiar in the ancient world.

Peter encourages Christian slaves to follow the example of Jesus Christ in their response to their non-Christian masters. They must first ensure that they have not committed any wrongdoing which would justify punishment from their masters. Then they must not retaliate, whether by revolt, by murder, by running away or by stealing and malingering. They must endeavour to do good to their masters, and endure suffering for doing good.

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[160]*Strom.* 5.8.49.1. See also 2 Macc. 2:28.

[161]*Prt.* 326D. See also E.K. Lee, "Short Studies," *NTS* 8 (1961-62) 172-173; G. Schrenk, *TDNT* I:772-773.

[162]See 4:19.

6) Summary

In setting our discussion of 2:18-25 against the social and historical background of slavery in Graeco-Roman society, we have highlighted the intensity of the conflict and dilemma which Christian slaves faced upon conversion. We have also seen what it means for slaves to do good to their masters. Peter's exhortation to Christian slaves to submit to their non-Christian masters, whether good or bad, and to do good and endure suffering reflect the high standard which masters in the ancient world expected of their slaves. Thus Peter urges Christian slaves to be good slaves, who will be commended while bad slaves will be punished. Christian slaves who are suffering must look to the example of Jesus Christ, who endured suffering for doing good.

CHAPTER 7

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHRISTIAN WIVES AND NON-CHRISTIAN HUSBANDS (3:1-6)

The second specific group which Peter addresses is Christian wives of non-Christian husbands.[1] The phrase καὶ εἴ τινες ἀπειθοῦσιν τῷ λόγῳ implies that there were some wives in this position.[2] Peter expresses his hope that these unbelieving husbands will see the good lives of their wives and be won over. He then expands on what it means for a Christian wife to display good conduct (3:2-4). In 3:5-6a he uses an example to reinforce his exhortation. Finally he urges Christian wives to do good and not to fear any terror (3:6b). The latter shows his awareness of the tension which they face in their relationship with their non-Christian husbands.

Most commentators agree that conflict arose because Christian wives had strayed from the well-respected custom of following their husbands' religion.[3] However, apart from a few comments, they do not discuss the nature of the husbands' religion, and fail to show how this contributed to the conflict between husband and wife.[4]

Balch is a partial exception. Like others, he is of the view that the reference to pagan husbands in 3:1 "should be understood against the social background in which a wife was expected to accept the customs and religious rites of her husband."[5] But he goes further to enquire into the nature of the husband's religion. He examines the phrase ἐκ τῆς ματαίας ὑμῶν ἀναστροφῆς πατροπαραδότου in 1:18b, and concludes that this "traditional piety" is the practice of the ancestral tradition.[6] It is the cult instituted by the forefathers. He then shows from Graeco-Roman literature that wives were expected to accept the traditional cult

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[1]There were some Christian husbands in the congregations, as Peter's brief exhortation in 3:7 shows.

[2]Achtemeier rightly argues that "the interrogative particle εἴ states a fact here, not a hypothetical possibility.": Achtemeier, 209.

[3]See, e.g., Beare, 153; Best, 124; Davids, 115; Michaels, 157; Achtemeier, 208.

[4]Achtemeier makes one reference to *lares*: 284n.

[5]Balch, *Wives*, 99.

[6]See also van Unnik, "The Critique of Paganism in 1 Peter 1:18," 129-142.

of her husband's family.[7]

Balch discusses one implication of the wife's conversion for her relationship with her non-Christian husband. He argues that harmony, which was an essential element in Graeco-Roman households, would be disturbed by the wife's conversion. Using the examples of women in the ancient world who became Jewish proselytes, he examines the conflict and tensions that conversion brought upon the household. Similarly, women converted to Christianity would also find themselves with severe domestic tension.

However this occupies only a minor place in Balch's overall thesis, which is centered on the function of the household code in 1 Peter.[8] He sets 3:1-6 against the background of Eastern cults like Dionysus and Isis. He argues that these new and foreign religions provoked much criticism and hostility in the ancient world. Similar hostility was also directed at Christianity, which was viewed as a new and foreign Eastern religion. Christian wives thus found themselves in conflict with their unbelieving husbands upon their conversion to the Christian way. Hence, Balch argues, the household code in 1 Peter serves primarily an apologetic function. In response to criticism and hostility from non-Christians, Peter uses the household code to defend Christianity, and to stop pagan slander.

Balch is right in saying that 3:1 should be understood against the background of a society in which a wife was expected to accept the customs and religious rites of her husband.[9] Her refusal to follow her husband's gods after conversion will have disrupted her relationship with her husband.

However Balch does not go far enough. Evidence from the Graeco-Roman world shows that the wife was not only expected to accept her husband's gods, but also to fulfil her role as materfamilias, which included joint responsibility with her husband for the worship of their household gods. While her acceptance of her husband's gods brought harmony to their relationship, her fulfilment of her responsibility in the worship of household gods ensured the favour of the gods upon the wellbeing of the family. It will have been her refusal to discharge this responsibility as well as her rejection of her husband's gods that created conflict between herself and her husband.

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[7]Balch, *Wives*, 84-85.

[8]A more detailed assessment of Balch's main thesis has been included in chapter 2.

[9]Michaels endorses Balch's view without further elaboration: Michaels, 157.

In this chapter, I will first discuss the husband-wife relationship in the ancient world, emphasising the role of the wife in her husband's household. Secondly, I will consider the implications of conversion on the wife's relationship with her husband. Finally I will examine Peter's exhortation to Christian wives, focusing on what it means for them to do good.

1) Husband-Wife Relationship in Graeco-Roman Society

Hierocles, a Stoic who compiled a handbook in the 2nd century CE on the duties that existed in social relationships in society, describes an exemplary household:

> The beauty of the household consists in the yoking together of a husband and wife who are united to each other by fate, are consecrated to the gods who preside over weddings, births and houses, agree with each other and have things in common, including their bodies, or rather their souls, and who exercise appropriate rule over their household and servants taking care in rearing their children and pay attention to the necessities of life which is neither intense nor slack but moderate and fitting.[10]

Although Hierocles compiled this handbook in the second century CE, his work reflects the view of the husband-wife relationship which had been commonly held for some time in the Graeco-Roman world.[11]

According to Hierocles, harmony is a very important element in the husband-wife relationship. The same view is expressed by Dio Chrysostom (40--after 112 CE), who defines a good marriage as one where there is "concord between man and wife," and a bad marriage as one where there is discord.[12] He observes that the bickering of husband and wife have wrecked many households.[13]

There were three important elements in a harmonious husband-wife relationship: both had to be consecrated to the same gods; they had to agree with each other and have things in common; and had to exercise appropriate rule over their household.

As we have noted in Chapter 1, the worship of gods was a very basic aspect of life in Graeco-Roman society. The household or οἶκος was a religious unit, and it possessed a

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[10]Hierocles, *On Duties* 4.23. Text and translation in Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, 102. All references to Hierocles below are from Malherbe's edition of the text.

[11]Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, 85.

[12]Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 38.15.

[13]Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 38.15.

distinct religious identity through the worship of the gods centred on the house.[14] Thus sharing the worship of the same gods was fundamental to the relationship between husband and wife. For this reason, Plutarch advises the newly married couple Pollianus and Eurydice:

> A wife ought not to make friends of her own, but to enjoy her husband's friends in common with him. The gods are the first and most important friends. Wherefore it is becoming for a wife to worship and to know only the gods that her husband believes in, and to shut the front door tight upon all queer rituals and outlandish superstitions. For with no god do stealthy and secret rites performed by a woman find any favour.[15]

In a harmonious marriage, both husband and wife must agree with each other and have things in common. But when the wife was converted, she would no longer be able to agree with her husband on a very fundamental aspect of their life together.

Unity between husband and wife was also evident when they both exercised appropriate rule over their household. Both husband and wife had specific roles to fulfil in their household. Generally, the husband's role took him outside the household where he was engaged in agriculture or commerce, while his wife stayed in the house.[16] The wife had to manage the household in such a way as to leave her husband free to pursue his public activities.[17]

One crucial part of the wife's role in managing the household well was in the worship of the household gods. In domestic religion, the family formed a distinct religious unit, with the paterfamilias as the high priest and his wife as the priestess.[18] According to Dionysius (1st century BCE), the wife shared "in all [her husband's] possessions and sacred rites."[19] She shared with her husband responsibility for the supervision of the worship of the household

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[14]In Hierocles' words, they were the gods who presided over weddings, births and houses.

[15]Plutarch, *Mor.* 140D. See also K. O'Brien Wicker, "First Century Marriage Ethics: A Comparative Study of Household Codes and Plutarch's Conjugal Precepts," in J.W. Flanagan & A.W. Robinson (eds.), *No Famine in the Land* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975) 141-154.

[16]Hierocles, *On Duties*, 4.28.21 (Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, 98). But note that Hierocles also advocated that husband and wife should not be completely uninformed about the other's work.

[17]The wife's good management was seen in her ability to economise in the household: Xenophon, *Oec.* 7.36. See also Columella, *Rest.* 12.7-8.

[18]L. Portefaix, *Sisters Rejoice: Paul's Letter to the Philippians and Luke-Acts as received by First-century Philippian Women* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1988) 43.

[19]Dionysius, *Ant. Rom.* 2.25.2.

gods.[20] Hence, the wife had a very important religious role in the household.[21] It will have been the failure of the Christian wife to fulfil this religious role that brought her into conflict with her non-Christian husband. In the next section, I will deal with the worship of household gods, and the wife's role in this.

2) Worship of Household Gods

The worship of gods could be found both in the cities and in the countryside.[22] Cicero (106-43 BCE) observed that in cities, the people had shrines; they had groves in the country, and homes for the *Lares*.[23] There was scarcely any matter that was not undertaken, even in private life, without first consulting the gods.[24] The people accepted that gods and the worship of gods were part of daily life.

Ancient people expressed their awareness and acknowledgement of gods at two levels, the public and the private. At the public level, some ceremonies were performed by special individuals on behalf of the state as a whole. Smaller units within the state like voluntary associations also publicly demonstrated their allegiance to their own patron gods.

At the private level, domestic religion was practised within the household. The husband and his wife had joint responsibility for the worship of the household gods. While very little was written about the worship of household gods, it was nevertheless a fact which the ancient people took for granted.[25] Household gods were such an integral part of Graeco-Roman life that Seneca places them alongside children and wives as "objects held dear by reason of kinship and blood and experience and long habit."[26]

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[20]J.P.V.D. Balsdon, *Roman Women: Their History and Habits* (London: The Bodley Head, 1962) 45.

[21]Theselff, *Chastity*. Text and translation in M.R. Lefkowitz & M.B. Fant, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1982) 104-105. See also Portefaix, *Sisters Rejoice*, 43-48.

[22]The evidence of the widespread practice of pagan cults can be seen in the form of temples and sanctuaries, statues and reliefs which showed the gods and their attributes, or in the shape of documents to pagan piety, or in the vows and prayers of worshippers: Mitchell, *Anatolia*, II.11-31.

[23]Cicero, *Leg.* 2.19.

[24]Cicero, *Div.* 1.28.

[25]W.W. Fowler, *Roman Ideas of Deity in the Last Century before the Christian Era* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1914) 15; Rice & Stambaugh, *Sources for the Study of Greek Religion*, 143. Orr acknowledges that household worship in the ancient world is imperfectly known: Orr, "Roman Domestic Religion," 1559.

[26]Seneca, *Ben.* 1.11.4. See also *Ben.* 7.31.4.

We have already noted in Chapter 6 that both Greek and Roman households engaged in the worship of domestic gods.[27] These gods had a distinct identity.[28] Basically they were gods handed down from the ancestors.[29] According to Cicero, people should preserve the rites of their families and their ancestors.[30]

Worship of household gods was centred around the family hearth. Here the family worshipped Hestia (called by the Romans Vesta) embodied in the living flame of the hearth.[31] According to Diodorus, Hestia discovered how to build houses, and "because of this benefaction of hers practically all men have established her shrine in every home, according her honours and sacrifices."[32] At the daily meal, a small part of the meal was placed on the hearth as an offering to Hestia.

Every house had a Lararium, which was a cupboard containing a little shrine with small statuettes representing the *Lares*.[33] They were basically guardians of the household.[34] In the prologue to Plautus's play *Aulularia*, Euclio's household god or *Lar Familiaris* describes his function: "For many years now I have possessed this dwelling, and preserved it for the sire and grandsire of its present occupant."[35] At the Lararium, offerings of spelt, grapes, garlands of grain, honeycakes, honeycombs, first fruits, wine and blood offerings would be made.

The worship of the *Lares* was closely connected with the affairs of the family. He was

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[27]Nilsson, "Roman and Greek Domestic Cults," 271-285.

[28]Ogilvie, *The Romans and Their Gods*, 100-105; Orr, "Roman Domestic Religion," 1557-1591; D.P. Harmon, "The Family Festivals of Rome," *ANRW* II.16.2.1592-1603.

[29]Cicero, *Leg.* 2.27. Nilsson is of the view that the domestic cult was inherited by the Romans and the Greeks from common ancestors: Nilsson, "Roman and Greek Domestic Cults," 271. Thus there were many similarities in the practice of Roman and Greek domestic cult.

[30]Cicero, *Leg.* 2.9.19.

[31]Ovid, *Fast.* 6.295ff; Nilsson, "Roman and Greek Domestic Cult," 271-272.

[32]Diodorus, *Histories* 5.68.1.

[33]In a corner of the hall in Trimalchio's house was a large cupboard containing a tiny shrine, wherein were silver housegods and a marble image of Venus: Petronius, *Sat.* 29. Epictetus kept an iron lamp by the side of his household gods: *Discourses* 1.18.15. See also Orr, "Roman Domestic Religion," 1563-1569; T.R. Glover, *The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire* (London: Methuen & Co., 1920) 14.

[34]There was the practice of consecrating houses to the *Lares* and *Penates* of families: Cicero, *Rep.* 5.7. There are two theories regarding the origin of the *Lares*. One is that *Lares* were originally gods of the fields and were introduced into the house from the crossroads: Nilsson, "Roman & Greek Domestic Cult," 277-278. The other is that *Lares* may have been the deified spirits of dead ancestors. See also *OCD*, 815-816.

[35]Plautus, *Aul*, Prologue 1-5.

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worshipped at weddings, at births, at the departure and return of a member of the family. The housewife held the *Lares* in high regard. She would pay tribute to the *Lares* of the family by decorating the hearth with garlands and flowers whenever a member of the family set out on or returned from a journey abroad. In return, the *Lares* sometimes rewarded her piety, as in these words spoken by Euclio's household god:

> She prays to me constantly, with daily gifts of incense, or wine, or something: she gives me garlands. Out of regard for her I caused Euclio (the father) to discover the treasure here in order that he might the more easily find her a husband, if he wished.[36]

Next there was the worship of the *Penates*.[37] The *Penates* were guardians of the family storeroom, which was situated behind the hearth. They were believed to ensure the continual supply of grain in the storeroom, and were thus a powerful symbol of the continuation of the household's means of subsistence.

Another element in domestic worship was the *Genius*, which was derived from the word meaning "to bring forth" or "to bear". The *Genius* generally referred to the power guiding the family, its procreative force, and the living spirit of the paterfamilias.[38] The worship of the *Genius* of the family ensured the fertility and continuity of the family. The *Genius* was worshipped on the birthday feast of the paterfamilias, and also when the paterfamilias was married.[39] Offerings included wine and honeycakes, and blood sacrifices of pigs and lambs.

Worship of the household gods was also important at significant stages of life in the family, for example, at childbirth, puberty, marriage and death. Rites were performed at childbirth to expel any evil spirits from the house.[40] While a marriage was perfectly valid if the two parties were eligible and had consented to be married, they would nevertheless carry out various elaborate rituals to seek divine blessing upon the success of their marriage.[41] There were also rites relating to the death, mourning and burial of a family member.[42]

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[36]Plautus, *Aul.* 23-28.

[37]*OCD*, 1135; Orr, "Roman Domestic Religion," 1562-1563.

[38]*OCD* 630; Orr, "Roman Domestic Religions," 1570.

[39]Nilsson, "Roman & Greek Domestic Cult," 281.

[40]Ogilvie, *The Romans and Their Gods*, 102ff.

[41]Ogilvie, *The Romans and Their Gods*, 103-104.

[42]Cicero, *Leg.* 2.22.55. After the internment and performance of the necessary ceremonies, family members placed the image of the departed in the most conspicuous position in the house, enclosed in a wooden shrine: Polybius, *Hist.* 6.53.5. See Harmon, "The Family Festivals of Rome," 1600-1603.

Apart from the worship of household gods, the family also participated in the different religious festivals of the year. Of significance to the family were the festivals relating to dead parents and immediate relatives ("Parentalia"), and other dead members of the household ("Lemuria"). Parentalia took place in February, when offerings were made by the family to commemorate their dead parents and relatives at their tombs.[43] "Lemuria" was another festival of the dead. The dead were regarded as hungry ghosts who prowled round the house, and certain rites had to be performed to get rid of them.[44]

The above survey shows that Graeco-Roman households engaged actively and regularly in the private worship of their gods. This worship expressed their dependence on the gods not only for the success of their everyday life, but also for the support and continuance of their life.[45] These gods indeed symbolised the continuity of Life:[46] Hestia (or Vesta) represented the continuity of the family life, as seen in the continual burning of the hearth fire; the *Penates* portrayed the continuity of the household's means of subsistence; the Genius expressed the power of the head of the family to continue its life. The cult of the dead pointed to a belief in the continuation of life, that death did not represent the final extinction of life. Thus, the well-being of a family ultimately depended on the goodwill of their gods, which could only be secured through performing proper acts of worship. The wife, in her role as materfamilias, played a very important role in the worship of household gods, as we shall see in the next section.

3) The Wife's Role in the Worship of Household Gods

The wife's responsibility for the worship of her husband's household gods began on the day following her wedding, although her first encounter with the gods took place on the wedding day itself.[47] Her entry into her husband's household was marked with a religious ceremony,

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[43]Ovid, *Fast.* 2.533-570. Ogilvie, *The Romans and Their Gods*, 75-76. See also J.M.C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1971) 61-64.

[44]Ovid, *Fast.* 5. 419-493.

[45]H.H. Scullard, *Festivals and Ceremonies of the Roman Republic* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 1981) 17.

[46]Fowler, *Roman Ideas of Deity*, 27-28. Fowler suggests that this is possibly the reason why the worship of the domestic gods was so persistent.

[47]For religious rites on the wedding day, see Harmon, "The Family Festivals of Rome," 1598-1600. See also Tacitus, *Ann.* 11.27.1; Dionysius, *Ant. Rom.* 2.25.3.

which was centred around the familial hearth.[48] This was to welcome the bride into her husband's household. Henceforth the bride belonged to her husband's household, and came under the protection of his household gods.[49]

There were other religious rites on the wedding day. One tradition required the bride to take three coins to her husband, one to be given to her husband, and the remaining two were reserved for the gods. She deposited one coin on the hearth of the household gods, and the other was dedicated at the shrine of the *lares compitales* at the crossroads.[50]

Upon marriage, the wife joined herself to her husband, and shared in all his possessions and sacred rites.[51] On the day following her wedding night, she assumed her role as materfamilias and presided for the first time over the household sacra.[52] Henceforth she took responsibility for both the gods and the virtue of the household.[53] It was customary to hold a dinner and drinking party at the bridegroom's house on the day after the wedding. At this party, the bride made her first offering to the household gods of her new home.[54] Ischomachus's wife joined him in offering sacrifices and prayer before he taught her her wifely duties. Presumably this took place at the commencement of their marriage.[55]

The wife was the one who daily tended the fire on the hearth, which was the major centre for the worship of household gods.[56] On festive days, she decorated the hearth with floral garlands.[57] During the religious festivals, she took joint charge of sacrifices and offerings with her husband. Her ability to fulfil this role during the religious festivals comes at the top of

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[48]Rice & Stambaugh, *Sources for the Study of Greek Religion*, 144; Zaidman & Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*, 69. A similar ceremony was held for new slaves: see pp. 152-153.

[49]H.J. Rose, *Religion in Greece and Rome* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959) 32.

[50]S. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) 166-167; Rose, *Religion*, 194.

[51]Dionysus, *Ant. Rom.* 2.25.1.

[52]Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.15.22. See also Balsdon, *Roman Women*, 185, 200.

[53]Osiek & Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 83.

[54]Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 169.

[55]Xenophon, *Oec.* 7.7.

[56]Horace, *Epod.* 2.40ff.

[57]Cato, *Rest.* 143.2.

Hierocles' list of a wife's virtues. Skill in household management only comes second.[58]

Wives played an important role in the domestic cult, particularly in connection with practical tasks such as preparing offerings and communal meals.[59] She was also responsible for teaching her children about the household gods and their part in the worship. She would teach her daughters to perform simple and every-day rites at the hearth, preparing them for their future role as materfamilias. She would teach her son to take a little of the food set aside each dinnertime, throw it into the fire and formally announce that the gods were favourable.[60]

From the above we see that the wife not only had to "shut the front door tight upon all queer rituals and outlandish superstitions",[61] and worship her husband's gods; she also had to fulfil a role as priestess in the worship of the household gods. Worshipping the same gods as her husband brought harmony to the household, and the proper performance of worship ensured the favour of the gods upon the family.[62] It is in this context that we can appreciate better the dilemma of the Christian wife in a pagan household, for her conversion would have had very significant implications for her relationship with her husband, his household and his neighbours.

4) The Effect of Conversion

By her conversion, the wife had rejected her husband's gods, for her new allegiance to Jesus Christ forbade her to worship other gods (cf. 4:3). Achtemeier concludes that this would incur her husband's disapproval as well as that of his family and acquaintances, but he does not elaborate how this would arise.[63] In this section, I will discuss the implications of the wife's conversion for her relationship with her husband, his family and his neighbours in the community.

First, the wife's conversion would cast doubt on her virtue as a good wife. She could no longer participate jointly with her husband in the worship of the household gods. Her rejection

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[58]Hierocles, *On Duties* 4.22. Horace urged a country woman to offer simple offerings to the *Lares* each month in order that her crops and her flock might be protected: *Odes* 3.23.

[59]Portefaix, *Sisters Rejoice*, 44.

[60]Rose, *Religion*, 177-178.

[61]Plutarch, *Mor.* 140D.

[62]Ogilvie, *Romans and Their Gods*, 17.

[63]Achtemeier, 208.

of the household gods would sever the bonds of common blood, which according to Cicero, "hold men fast through good-will and affection; for it means much to share in common the same family traditions, the same forms of domestic worship, and the same ancestral tombs."[64] It would alienate her from her husband and his family, both the living and the dead members, and would create disharmony in the household. In the eyes of her husband and their community, she would be perceived as an insubordinate wife.

Secondly, her refusal to play her active role in the worship of household gods would be held to incur the disfavour of the gods and put the well-being of the household in jeopardy. Her worship of an alien deity would be regarded as likely to displease the household gods.[65] The rest of the family would also be thought to be at risk because worship of the household gods had ensured continuity of life within the family, and the wife's conversion would seem to threaten the success and continuance of the family, and ultimately that of the community.[66] This would further increase the tension and conflict within the household, and might even give her cause for fear.

Thirdly, the wife's conversion had implications for her management of the household, which might be the source of further conflict between her and her husband. One conflict area concerned the Christian education of children in the home. Traditionally, the mother was in charge of the religious education of her children, instructing them in the worship of the household gods. Conflict could also arise over the use of household expenditure. A Christian wife might wish to use the household money to support the poor or to give to the needs of the Christian community. Disagreement between husband and wife might arise in all these areas.

However the consequences of the wife's conversion were not restricted to the confines of her husband's household. There will have been implications for the relationship between her husband (and his family) and his neighbours in the community. In Graeco-Roman society, a

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[64]Cicero, *Off.* 1.55.

[65]Plutarch, *Mor.* 140D.

[66]G.T. Osborn, "Economic Factors in the Persecutions of Christians to AD 260," in McNeill, Spurika & Willoughby (eds.), *Environmental Factors in Christian History*, 133; R.S. Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions Among Pagans, Jews and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) 50-51.

person's honour was a highly valued commodity.[67] Malina describes honour as "a claim to worth and the social acknowledgement of that worth".[68] Conversely, to be dishonoured was to lose one's repute and worth in the eyes of others, especially one's peers.

One was considered to have lost one's honour in the eyes of one's neighbours when weakness, cowardice, pretension or foolishness were exposed publicly. What constituted weakness, cowardice, pretension or foolishness would depend on the context of a particular situation and community. A husband of a Christian wife would be viewed as one whose authority within the household had been called into question and then spurned. This would be interpreted by members of the community as weakness on the part of the husband, and would bring him dishonour.

This dishonour would extend to the rest of the family, for another aspect of the ancient honour code was that honour was primarily a group value.[69] Individual members of a particular group derived their honour from the group. It was the head of the group who was responsible for the honour of the group in its relationship with outsiders. He symbolised the group's honour as well.[70] Thus it was the husband who was accountable for the honour of his family, and any dishonour cast upon him was also borne by the rest of the family.

Persistent belief in the Christian gospel on the wife's part, and her participation in the Christian community, would underscore her continual insubordination to her husband. For the husband to tolerate his believing wife in this would be viewed by his neighbours as an act of weakness and cowardice. According to Plutarch, "it is not difficult for any man to get rid of a bad wife if he be a real man and not a slave."[71] These words imply that it was thought cowardly for a man not to get rid of a bad wife, by initiating divorce proceedings against her.

Under the terms of their marriage contract, the husband would have the option of divorcing his Christian wife, for she would be held to have breached her marital obligations.[72]

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[67]J. Plevnik, "Honor/Shame," in J.J. Pilch & B.J. Malina (eds.), *Biblical Social Values and Their Meaning: A Handbook*, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993) 95-104.

[68]B.J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981) 28.

[69]Plevnik, "Honor/Shame," 96.

[70]Malina, *The New Testament World*, 40.

[71]Plutarch, *Mor.* 100E.

[72]For divorce in the ancient world, see C.S. Keener, *And Marries Another: Divorce and Remarriage in the Teaching of the New Testament* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991) 52; J. Carcopino, *Daily*

The usual marital obligations, which could be found in stereotypical marriage contracts at that time,[73] included the following:

1. the wife must be submissive to her husband;
2. she may not leave the marital residence without his permission;
3. she may not engage in social contact with other men;
4. she must not bring financial ruin upon the household;
5. she must not do anything to shame her husband.[74]

A wife who had breached her marital obligations was perceived by her community as a bad wife. If in these circumstances, her husband took no action he would bring further dishonour upon himself and his family, for he would be seen as cowardly for not asserting his authority over his wife. In such circumstances, one can understand the dilemma of the Christian wife, and the pressure that the husband might bring to bear upon his wife to renounce her faith.

It is my contention that Peter's exhortation to believing wives in 3:1-6 can best be understood against the social, religious and cultural background described above. It was at the private level of the household that the dilemma for the believing wife will have been at its most intense, for a wife's conversion would inevitably create conflict and disharmony, and even hostility, in the household, to the extent that she might even fear for her own safety. The situation would grow even more intense when the wife sought to convert the husband by preaching to him. This might turn the home into a battlefield.[75]

Tertullian well summed up the dilemma of a Christian wife married to a non-Christian husband:[76] when she wanted to attend early morning worship, her husband would tell her to meet him at the baths; when she intended to fast, he would arrange a banquet for that day; when works of charity needed her time, her husband would find her more important family business to do; she would not be allowed by her husband to go to night meetings and all-night Easter celebration; when she would have welcomed travelling Christians into her house, he would not receive them. Instead, she was required by her husband to attend to his gods.

Life in Ancient Rome (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973) 95-100; Balsdon, *Roman Women*, 209ff.

[73]D.C. Verner, *The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Letters* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1983) 38.

[74]Verner, *The Household of God*, 38.

[75]Portefaix, *Sisters Rejoice*, 195.

[76]Tertullian, *To His Wife* II.4, cited in Osiek & Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 151.

Although Tertullian wrote at the end of the second century CE, it is possible to envisage a similar dilemma for Christian wives in 1 Peter. It was a situation which Peter had to address.

5) Peter's Exhortation to Christian Wives (3:1-6)

In 3:1-6 Peter expands his instruction in 2:12 in the context of the husband-wife relationship. In 2:12 and 3:2, the same word ἐποπτευεῖν is used. In 2:12 what can be seen by non-Christians are the good works of Christians (ἐκ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων ἐποπτεύοντες). These good works correspond to τὴν ἀναστροφὴν ... καλήν in 2:12a. In 3:2, what can be observed by unbelieving husbands is τὴν ἐν φόβῳ ἁγνὴν ἀναστροφὴν ὑμῶν, which refers to τῆς τῶν γυναικῶν ἀναστροφῆς in 3:1. Thus in 3:1-6, Peter is urging Christian wives to live good lives and to do good so that their non-Christian husbands will see their conduct, and be won over to the gospel.

Peter then explains the meaning of good conduct. Good conduct in a Christian wife must be characterised by her submissiveness to her own husband, her purity and respect, her cultivation of inner beauty rather than her outward adornment of braided hair, gold jewellery and fine clothes. We shall see in the next section that these criteria conform to the standard of a good wife in Graeco-Roman society.[77]

Plutarch's *Advice to the Bride and Groom*, which was delivered at the wedding of his two friends Pollianus and Eurydice, is a good example of first-century CE exhortation to wives. The advice given is described as "what you have often heard"; that is, it represents the common standard of their society and reflects the ideal expectations of society for husbands and wives.[78] There are some parallels between Plutarch's *Advice* and 1 Peter 3:1-6 concerning the kind of good conduct that was expected of Graeco-Roman wives, and this reinforces the view that Peter was urging a standard which conformed to the highest standard of Graeco-Roman society. The two writings were almost contemporaneous, and both had a common paraenetic purpose.[79]

Peter urges Christian wives to submit to their husbands (3:1), showing his awareness that

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[77]Many Greco-Roman writers regard these as qualities of a good wife, e.g., Seneca, *Helv.* 16.4; *Ben.* 1.10.2; 7.9.4-5; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 7.117; Juvenal, *Sat.* 3.180-181; 6.457-463; 7.9.4-5; Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.54.

[78]Plutarch, *Mor.* 138C.

[79]Wicker, "First Century Marriage Ethics," 141-142.

submission to one's husband was a highly valued virtue in ancient society. Plutarch asserted that when wives subordinated themselves to their husbands, they were to be commended (ἐπαινοῦνται).[80] Although Christian wives could not submit to their husbands in the worship of household gods, they could submit to them in areas which did not conflict with their Christian beliefs, thus showing themselves to be good wives.

It is pertinent to note that Peter encourages Christian wives to win over their husbands through their conduct and not through words. Any attempt to convert their husbands through words might be interpreted as an endeavour to exercise control over them. In Plutarch's view, such women "cut a sorrier figure than the subjects of their control."[81]

In Peter's view, a Christian wife's good conduct must be characterised by purity and respect. Most scholars interpret ἐν φόβῳ to mean reverence to God.[82] Only a few have interpreted ἐν φόβῳ as respect for the husband.[83] The word φόβος can mean 'fear' or 'reverence' or 'respect'. The object of this fear or reverence or respect is either God or the unbelieving husband.

We can immediately rule out the meaning 'fear' because it contradicts Peter's injunction in 3:6b. Most scholars think that reverence for God is in view because the word φόβος is used in relation to God in 2:17. When φόβος is used elsewhere in the letter, the object is not stated (1:17; 2:18; 3:2, 16); hence many scholars have interpreted ἐν φόβῳ in the light of 2:17. However ἐν φόβῳ should be interpreted in its immediate context. In 3:1-6 the context is the relationship between Christian wives and their non-Christian husbands. The former had rejected their husbands' household gods, and this will have been perceived as insubordination and loss of respect for the husbands. Thus Peter's exhortation to Christian wives to respect their husbands would be consistent with behaviour that might win them over.

Michaels sumarises this exhortation as follows, "A pagan married to a Christian woman

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[80]Plutarch, *Mor.* 142E. According to Plutarch, a husband's control over his wife should not be harsh or oppressive, but he should have consideration for the wife's feelings.

[81]Plutarch, *Mor.* 142E.

[82]See e.g., Michaels, 158; Achtemier, 210.

[83]See D. Sylva, "Translating and interpreting 1 Peter 3:2," *BT* 34 (1983) 144-147. Sylva's basis for the minority view is not convincing. He sees a parallel between 3:2 and 2:18, and since he interprets ἐν πᾶντι φόβῳ in 2:18 to refer to respect of slavemasters, correspondingly ἐν φόβῳ in 3:2 must mean respect for unbelieving husbands. However the interpretation of ἐν πᾶντι φόβῳ in 2:18 is also subject to the same ambiguity as ἐν φόβῳ in 3:2.

must be able to see that his wife's conduct is 'reverent' and 'pure' by Roman standards even though she cannot join him in the worship of his gods."[84] But he undermines this with his next sentence: "These virtues, while directed toward God and not toward her husband, are nonetheless for her husband's benefit."[85] It is hard to see how a pagan husband could judge by his Roman standards that his wife's conduct was reverent toward her Christian God. Any act of reverence toward God on the wife's part might actually irritate her husband and add to the existing domestic conflict rather than win him over. Plutarch advised that a wife should do all she could to refrain from things which might disquiet and irritate her husband:

> Since then, this is also the case with men, that some cannot well endure the sight of scarlet and purple clothes, while others are annoyed by cymbals and drums, what terrible hardship is it for someone to refrain from such things, and not disquiet or irritate their husbands, but live with them in constant gentleness?[86]

What a pagan husband could see as the conduct of a good wife, judging by his Roman standards, would be his wife's respect for him. Pliny, describing Macrinus' late wife as "a lady whose virtues would have made her a pattern even to ancient times" wrote: "How respectful was her behaviour to him! and how did she herself deserve the highest respect!"[87]

Besides showing respect for her husband, a Christian wife's conduct must also be 'pure' (ἁγνή; 3:2), a term which connotes modesty or chastity. Peter elaborates on this in 3:3-4. Graeco-Roman society saw a woman's physical adornment as an expression of her character,[88] as can be seen from Seneca's praise of his mother:

> Unchastity, the greatest evil of our time, has never classed you with the great majority of women; jewels have not moved you, nor pearls; ... you have not defiled your face with paints and cosmetics; never have you fancied the kind of dress that exposed no greater nakedness by being removed. In you has been seen that peerless ornament, that fairest beauty on which time lays no hand, the chiefest glory which is modesty.[89]

Peter uses antithesis, which we have noted is a common literary device in paraenetic instruction, to stress the need for Christian wives to appear modest in the eyes of their non-

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[84]Michaels, 158.

[85]Michaels, 158.

[86]Plutarch, *Mor.* 144E. The reference to cymbals and drums may be an allusion to the wife's interest in a foreign religion such as the worship of Cybele.

[87]Pliny, *Ep.* 8.5.

[88]Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.457-465.

[89]Seneca, *Helv.* 16.

Christian husbands. He contrasts outward comeliness with inner beauty. Again Peter's exhortation reflects the ideal in Graeco-Roman society. A good Graeco-Roman wife avoided decorating herself with extravagant and ostentatious adornment. Plutarch advised that women should not beautify themselves with "adornment of gold or precious stones or scarlet."[90] Instead, they must adorn themselves with dignity, good behaviour and modesty.[91] Similarly Peter cautions Christian wives against adorning themselves with "braided hair and the wearing of gold jewellery and fine clothes". Instead they must adorn themselves with "the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight" (3:4).

In classical and Hellenistic Greek πραΰς ('gentle') can be used of things, of animals, of persons, or of acts and feelings.[92] It denoted a virtue which was highly regarded in the ancient world, especially in women. Thus Plutarch advises Eurydice that she should do all she could to live with her husband in constant gentleness (μετὰ πραΰτητος).[93]Here μετὰ πραΰτητος denotes a measured response to a potentially difficult situation. It is "an active attitude and deliberate acceptance, not just a passive submission."[94]

In 3:4, Christian wives are similarly exhorted to be gentle. The same word is also used in 3:16 concerning the attitude with which Christians are to answer questions from non-Christians. Gentleness is the appropriate response to hostility and aggression. Thus Christian wives when faced with hostility from their husbands must not react with antagonism but with gentleness. They must not answer invective with invective but with quietness.

5) Example of Sarah

At the close of his oration, Plutarch enjoins Eurydice to be adorned "without price, with rare and precious jewels," which would cause her to be admired by other women.[95] The phrase "rare and precious jewels" refers not to tangible jewels, but to inner, intangible qualities. He cites the examples of various famous and noble women of old who possessed these qualities

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[90]Plutarch, *Mor.* 141E.

[91]Plutarch, *Mor.* 141B.

[92]*TDNT* VI:645.

[93]Plutarch, *Mor.* 144E.

[94]*TDNT* VI:645.

[95]Plutarch, *Mor.* 145E.

of inner beauty:

> For you cannot acquire and put upon you this rich woman's pearls or that foreign woman's skills without buying them at a high price, but the ornaments of Theano, Cleobuline, Gorgo, the wife of Leonides, Timocleia, the sister of Theageres, Claudia of old, Cornelia, daughter of Serpiro, and of all other women who have been admired and renowned, you may wear about you without price, and adorning yourself with these, you may live a life of distinction and happiness.[96]

All the examples Plutarch cites possessed admirable qualities. Gorgo was famed for her wisdom and shrewdness in discovering a hidden message on a tablet which was covered with wax.[97] Claudia was well-known for her purity.[98] Timocleia saved her own modesty and her family silver by her courage and wit.[99] Cornelia was renowned for her virtue, fidelity and her intelligence.[100]

Just as Plutarch uses these examples to exhort Eurydice, Peter uses the example of holy women of old, and of Sarah in particular, to reinforce his counsel to Christian wives. He appears to have in mind the wives of OT patriarchs: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah. Sarah is singled out in verse 6. These women are cited as examples of submissiveness to husbands. Sarah "obeyed Abraham and called him her master" (cf. Gen. 18:12).

Many have found Peter's use of Sarah as an example of submissiveness and obedience to her husband somewhat puzzling.[101] The main difficulty is that the context of Sarah's address of Abraham as her "lord" in Genesis 18:12 does not portray Sarah as submissive. Rather Sarah is expressing amused scepticism at the announcement she has overheard that she will bear a child the following year.

Various attempts have been made to explain away this difficulty. Michaels suggests that the solution "lies in not reading too much profound theology into Peter's simple language."[102] His view is that Peter ignores the context and fastens on to one word, κύριος. Thus, Peter's argument was "from the greater to the lesser: if Sarah "obeyed" Abraham and called him

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[96]Plutarch, *Mor.* 145E.

[97]Herodotus, 7.239.

[98]Livy, 29.14.12.

[99]Plutarch, *Alexander* 12.

[100]Lefkowitz & Fant, *Women's Life*, 138-139.

[101]E.g., Michaels, 164.

[102]Michaels, 165.

"Lord", the Christian wives in Asia should at least treat their husbands with deference and respect."

Kiley argues that Peter has Genesis 12 and 20 in mind as the unspoken background to 3:6.[103] There are parallels between the addressees of 3:1-6 and Sarah in Genesis 12 and 20. Both were in a foreign land or a hostile environment. Both were unjustly treated. Commenting on these parallels, Kiley writes:,

> And since the author is concerned with the behaviour of the addressees precisely when they are being treated unjustly, it should come as no surprise if his exhortation to wives is based on a story of Sarah's submission to her husband's less-than-noble will.[104]

On the other hand, Sly attempts to explain the difficulty by looking at contemporary Jewish treatment of the Abraham/Sarah narratives. He argues that both Philo and Josephus avoid details in the biblical account which do not seem appropriate to them. Peter does the same, and in 3:6b,

> he argues polemically, citing some evidence that does not stand up to scrutiny and avoid others.He has moulded Sarah to the image of the ideal Hellenistic wife, even at the price of reversing the biblical record.[105]

Balch also refers to Jewish interpretation of the Abraham/Sarah narrative in Genesis 18:12-13.[106] He notes that in the rabbinic interpretation of this passage it is used to interpret the blessing of peace in Numbers 6:26. By the middle of the second century CE, the rabbis interpreted Genesis 18:12-13 to emphasise peace between husband and wife. Balch argues that the same text is used by Peter to stress "the hierarchical, peaceful relationships in the household," but that Peter has ignored the original context.[107]

The above attempts to explain Peter's use of Sarah as an example to Christian wives of non-Christian husbands tend to overlook the literary aspect of 3:5-6. Peter makes use of paradeigmata, a literary device which was typical of Graeco-Roman paraenesis. In chapter 3 of this thesis, we established that 1 Peter comes within the genre of paraenesis. It is therefore not surprising that Peter should employ a device consistent with this genre, one which his

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[103]M. Kiley, "Like Sara: The Tale of Terror Behind 1 Pet. 3:6," *JBL* 106 (1987) 689-692.

[104]Kiley, "Like Sara," 691.

[105]D.L. Sly, "1 Peter 3:6b in the Light of Philo and Josephus," *JBL* 110 (1991) 126-129.

[106]Balch, *Wives*, 103-105.

[107]Balch, *Wives*, 104.

Gentile audience would understand.

Thus we must examine the use of example in Graeco-Roman paraenesis. In his study of the function of personal example in ancient literary writings, Fiore deduces four functions of example.[108] The first function is that of a sample, which is one instance of a category. In a sample, the author constructs his own example. The second function is that of a specimen. This is similar to a sample, except that the example has not been fabricated by the author. In both the sample and the specimen, the end in view is the discovery and recognition of the examplar. Thirdly, example functions as prototype or model. The end in view is for the audience to imitate the model. Finally, example serves as a means of instruction, on the basis of a pattern in personal circumstances or historical events. Here the audience is to learn from the example so as to aid them in formulating future decisions.

Peter uses the historical examples of the wives of OT patriarchs to encourage Christian wives to imitate them, in particular the example of Sarah (3:6). Thus the function of example in 3:5-6 is that of prototype or model. The next question that must be asked is, What is the content of the model? What is to be imitated? According to Fiore, the answer to these questions depends on the function of the example. Where it is the aim of the author to demonstrate particular virtues or vices to follow or to avoid, "then the deeds or particular qualities given are witnesses not to the whole personality but to the aspect being considered."[109]

> Seneca's use of example in his letters illustrate this. He writes:
>
> Or, if you enjoy living with Greeks also, spend your time with Socrates and with Zeno: the former will show you how to die if it be necessary; the latter how to die before it is necessary. Live with Chrysippus, with Posdonius: they will make you acquainted with things earthly and things heavenly; they will bid you work hard over something more than neat turn of language and phrases mouthed forth for the entertainment of listeners; they will bid you be stout of heart and rise superior to threats.[110]

In 3:5-6, it is the submissiveness of the wives of OT patriarchs to their husbands that Peter wants Christian wives to imitate. He reiterates this in the example of Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him κύριος. He has already expressed this injunction to submit in verse

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[108]B. Fiore, *The Function of Personal Example in the Socratic and Pastoral Epistles (Rome: Biblical Institute Press*, 1986) 90-91.

[109]Fiore, *The Function of Personal Example*, 92.

[110]*Ep.* 104.21-22. See also *Ep* 95.72.

1, and the use of the example in 3:5-6 reinforces his point.

Thus in 3:6 Peter is concerned with only one aspect of Sarah's life, her address of Abraham as κύριος which signified her obedience to him. He is not concerned with other aspects of Sarah's personality or other periods of Sarah's life as alleged by Kiley. Further (contra to Michaels' view), the context in Genesis 18 is relevant. The form Sarah's obedience is to take is implicit in the announcement of the birth of a son to her, and in what follows: although sceptical upon hearing the announcement, she (it is implied) submits to Abraham in the exercise of his marital rights, and subsequently gives birth to Isaac as promised.

Sexual relations between husband and wife were an important part of marriage, although often overlooked in recent discussion of the relationship between Christian wives and non-Christian husbands. Margaret MacDonald, in her discussion of the position of early Christian women married to unbelievers, suggests that this was one area which gave rise to conflict between Christian wives and their non-Christian husbands.[111] She suggests that the attitude of Christian wives may be similar to Joseph's view when faced with a proposal of marriage to the as yet unconverted Aseneth in *Joseph and Aseneth*, a Graeco-Roman Jewish romance variously dated between first century BCE and second century CE:

> It is not fitting for a man who worships God, who will bless with his mouth the living God and eat blessed bread of life and drink a blessed cup of immortality and anoint himself with blessed ointment of incorruptibility to kiss a strange woman who will bless with her mouth dead and dumb idols and eat from their table bread of strangulation and drink from their libation a cup of insidiousness and anoint herself with ointment of destruction.[112]

MacDonald cites the example of women in the Apocryphal Acts who understood their Christian conversion as precluding sexual union with unbelievers.[113] Another example is that of the Christian woman in Justin's *Second Apology*, who finally divorced her pagan husband so that "she might not, by continuing in matrimonial connection with him, and by sharing his table and his bed, become a partaker also in his wickedness and impieties."[114]

Although there is no direct evidence to show that Christian wives in Asia Minor were

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[111]M.Y. MacDonald, "Early Christian Women married to Unbelievers," *Studies in Religion* 19 (1990) 221-234. MacDonald's discussion is based on 1 Corinthians 7:12-16. She makes three references to 1 Pet. 3:1-6, but makes no comment about these verses.

[112]*Joseph & Aseneth* 8:5 (Tr. J.H. Charlesworth).

[113]*Acts of Peter* 34; *Acts of Paul & Thecla* 3:20.

[114]Justin, *Apol.* 2.2.

abstaining or were contemplating abstention from marital relations with their non-Christian husbands, it cannot be disputed that tensions between husband and wife were bound to arise if the latter showed any unwillingness to engage in sexual relations. MacDonald has shown that, at a period only slightly later than that of 1 Peter, early Christian women married to unbelievers were faced with this issue, and responded by withdrawing from their husbands.

We have seen that wives in Graeco-Roman society were expected to submit to their husbands. This would include the area of sexual relations. Plutarch's advice to Eurydice reflects this expectation:

> A young Spartan woman, in answer to an inquiry as to whether she had already made advances to her husband, said, 'No, but he has made them to me.' This behaviour, I take it, is characteristic of the true mistress of the household, on the one hand, not to avoid or to feel annoyed at such actions on the part of her husband if he begins them, and on the other not to take the initiative herself.[115]

Thus a good wife was one who submitted to sexual intercourse with her husband. In the light of this, it is possible that Peter uses the example of Sarah's submission to her husband Abraham to reassure Christian wives in Asia Minor that submission to their own husbands in marital relations is appropriate, for it conforms to society's expectations of a good wife.

Peter ends his exhortation to Christian wives by urging them to do good and not to be fearful (3:6b). In so doing, they will show themselves to be Sarah's children. Achtemeier seems correct to dismiss the suggestion that the words ἧς ἐγενήθητε τέκνα is a reference to their having become "children of Sarah" at the time of their baptism.[116] The issue, rather, is how Christian wives were to behave within a non-Christian household. Sarah is used as an example or a model of how Christian women would conduct themselves within their marriage.[117]

Christian wives are encouraged to do good (ἀγαθοποιοῦσαι). In chapter 5, we have seen that ἀγαθοποιέω in the context of the relationship between governing authorities and citizens includes acts of public benefaction. Some women were, indeed, honoured for their public benefaction. An example is the priestess Lalla of Lycia, whose deeds are described in this inscription (first century CE):

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[115]Plutarch, *Mor.* 140C. See also Dio Chrysostom, *Frag.* 3.

[116]Achtemeier, 216.

[117]Achtemeier, 216.

> The people of Arneae and vicinity, to Lalla daughter of Timarchus son of Diotinius, their fellow citizen, wife of Diotinus son of Vassus, priestess of the Emperor's cult and gymnasiarch out of her own resources, honoured five times, chaste, cultivated, devoted to her husband and a model of all virtue, surpassing in every respect. She has glorified her ancestors' virtues with the example of her own character.[118]

It is important to note that Lalla was honoured not only for her acts of public benefaction, but also for her character, chastity and devotion to her husband. Here ἀγαθοποιέω cannot be limited to public benefaction. In any event, it is doubtful that Peter has public benefactions in mind in 3:6b, as it appears from the inscription above that only wealthy women could afford to be public benefactors. Further, public benefactions sought to enhance one's relationship with the people. In 3:6b Peter is concerned only with the relationship between Christian wives and their non-Christian husbands. It is difficult to see how a wife's act of public benefaction could ease tension within the household and eventually lead him to conversion. Moreover, Peter's use of Sarah as an example for Christian wives in 3:6 qualifies the kind of good works he has in mind, namely submission to one's husband (and not financial contribution to one's city).

Thus it makes better sense to interpret ἀγαθοποιοῦσαι in the context of 3:1-6. In these verses, Peter has described the characteristics of a good wife in a way which accords with the ideals of Graeco-Roman society. She must be submissive to her own husband, respecting him and not denying him his marital rights. She must be chaste, not adorning herself with ostentatious ornaments but possessing a humble and quiet spirit.

Various inscriptions testify to these qualities being highly regarded in Graeco-Roman society. These inscriptions also recorded other commendable qualities of a good wife. Inscriptions on epitaphs tended to preserve ideals rather than historical fact, and as such they constituted "a record of approved public and private behaviour."[119] They show us what Graeco-Roman society regarded as conduct of a good wife.

One epitaph erected by a husband for his wife (in Rome, between 18 and 2BCE) reads:

> As to your domestic virtues, loyalty (to our marriage), obedience, courteousness, easy good-nature, your assiduous wool-working, reverence (for the gods) without superstition, attire not designed for attracting attention, modest refinement - what need have I to make

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[118]Leftkowitz & Fant, *Women's Life*, 157.

[119]Leftkowitz & Fant, *Women's Life*, 11.

mention of these?[120]

Another inscription reads: "She loved her husband with her whole heart. She bore two sons. Cheerful in conversation, dignified in manner, she kept house, she made wool."[121]

Thus in exhorting Christian wives to do good, Peter urges them specifically to be good wives to their husbands. He also encourages them not to fear, a detail which suggests the difficulties which Christian wives may have encountered in their relationship with their non-Christian husbands, who might resort to abuse when their wives rejected the worship of the traditional household gods. It is to address this difficult marital situation that Peter exhorts Christian wives to conform in all other respects to Graeco-Roman ideals of wifely behaviour.

6) Summary

Setting 3:1-6 against the Graeco-Roman background of the husband-wife relationship has given us insight to the dilemma faced by Christian wives in their relations with their non-Christian husbands. Her rejection of her husband's gods and her refusal to fulfil her rôle as materfamilias in the worship of household gods will have brought dishonour to her husband and his family. Husbands might have resorted to abuse, and wives might have been tempted to divorce or abstain from sexual relations.

In this delicate situation, Peter exhorts Christian wives to be good wives to their husbands. In so doing, he urges them to remain in the marriage. Withdrawal from the marriage is not an option, in spite of tension and conflict between husband and wife.[122] Believing wives must seek to reduce the tension and conflict that had arisen within the marriage owing to their rejection of their husbands' household gods. They can do this by being submissive to their own husbands, respecting them and not denying them their marital rights. They must be chaste, adorned with inner beauty rather than external finery. When faced with hostility from their husbands, they must not react with antagonism but with gentleness. All these attributes correspond to the high ideals of their society.[123] Peter hopes that by their good conduct, they

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[120]Horsley, *New Documents* 3 (1983) 34.

[121]F.R. Cowell, *Everyday Life in Ancient Rome* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1961) 63.

[122]See Justin, *Apol.* 2.2 for an example of a believing wife who divorced her unbelieving husband.

[123]Michaels, 158ff; E.S. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (London: SCM Press, 1983) 260-266.

may even win their husbands over to the gospel (3:1-2).

CHAPTER 8

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND NON-CHRISTIAN FRIENDS (3:9-12)

Thus far we have examined Peter's exhortation to Christians on their response to non-Christian governing authorities and fellow citizens (2:13-17), to non-Christian masters (2:18-25), and to non-Christian husbands (3:1-6). This is followed by a very brief admonition to Christian husbands on how they should treat their wives, who presumably would be Christians too (3:7).[1] 3:8-12 ends this middle section of paraenetic instruction in 1 Peter, and as in 2:13-17, this is addressed to all Christians.

The language of 3:8 describes the way Christians relate with one another, and indicates that Peter was still thinking of relationships within the Christian community, as in 3:7. There are similar exhortations in other parts of the NT. Although ὁμόφρονες is only found in 3:8, the idea of "same-mindedness" can be found in Pauline injunction concerning relationships between Christians.[2] Similarly συμπαθεῖς and εὔσπλαγχνοι can be found elsewhere in the NT to refer to conduct among Christians.[3] φιλάδελφοι and ταπεινόφρονες are used by Peter in other parts of his letter dealing with the way Christians ought to relate with each other.[4]

3:9-12 resumes the subject of relationships between Christians and non-Christians, which Peter had left off at 3:6. There is what Michaels calls, "an unannounced transition" from one to the other,[5] just as Paul's instructions to the Romans move from Christians' relationships with one another in Romans 12:9-13 to their relationships with their persecutors in 12:14-21. Such a transition is not surprising in 1 Peter, considering that the two main strands in the letter

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[1]See C.D. Gross, "Are the Wives of 1 Peter 3.7 Christians?" *JSNT* 35 (1989) 89-96 for the view that 3:7 refers to non-Christian wives. However Gross fails to consider two important matters: first, Peter's portrayal of Christian/non-Christian relationships in 2:13-3:6 and 3:9-12 is one of conflict and hostility, and secondly, the appropriate response to such hostility is to do good (see chapter 4). Neither element is present in 3:7. It would be better to see 3:7 as referring to Christian wives. In 3:8 Peter also addresses Christians in their relationships with each other.

[2]E.g., Rom. 15:5; 1 Cor. 1:12; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:2; 4:2.

[3]For use of cognate form of συμπαθεῖς, see Heb. 10:34; for εὔσπλαγχνοι , see Eph. 4:32.

[4]For use of φιλάδελφοι, see 1:22. See also Rom. 12:10, 1 Thess. 4:9. Heb. 13:1, 2 Pet. 1:7 where the contexts relate to conduct among Christians. As for ταπεινόφρονες, see 5:5-6..

[5]Michaels, 175.

are relationships between Christians, and relationships between Christians and non-Christians. Peter moves from one strand to the other elsewhere in his letter.[6]

In 3:8-12 he brings to a close the section, beginning at 2:11, which deals with specific relationships between Christians and non-Christians. τὸ τέλος is used in 3:8. Is 3:9-12 a summary of 2:11-3:6, or a final part of this section? I will turn to this question now.

1) 3:9-12: A Summary or a Concluding Section?

Peter's injunction in 3:9 - "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing" - can be understood as reinforcing what has already been said in 2:11-3:6 in respect of relationships between Christians and non-Christians.[7] In 2:15, Peter exhorts Christians not to use their freedom for evil but for good. He hopes that doing good would silence the ignorant talk of foolish men, who speak maliciously of their good works. In 2:20, Christian slaves are encouraged to do good and to be willing to tolerate unjust suffering at the hands of their harsh masters. They must follow the example of Jesus Christ, who did not retaliate when his enemies hurled insults at him. It can therefore be argued that 3:9-12 is a summary of 2:11-3:6.

However if 3:9-12 were only a summary of 2:11-3:6, one would expect Peter's reiteration to include his repeated exhortation to submit in 2:13, 2:18, and 3:1. But there is no such exhortation in 3:9. Rather Peter encourages Christians to refrain from retaliating against non-Christians and to do good. In my view 3:9-12 is a concluding section, which addresses a particular kind of social relationship.

Furthermore, the structure of 3:8-12 suggests that it is not a summary of 2:11-3:6. The structure is similar to that in 2:13-17, 2:18-25 and 3:1-6.[8] It begins with an address, πάντες,[9] a conjunctive adverbial phrase τὸ δὲ τέλος,[10] followed by paraenetic instruction, and concluding with the basis for paraenesis. Thus 3:9-12 can be seen as the final part of the section beginning at 2:11 on the subject of relationships between Christians and non-Christians.

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[6]From living as strangers in reverent fear in 1:17-21 to loving one another as brothers in 1:22; from relationships within the Christian community in 4:7-11 to relationships with non-Christians in 4:12-19.

[7]Michaels, 174; Best, 128.

[8]Achtemeier, 220-221.

[9]οἰκέται in 2:18; γυναῖκες in 3:1.

[10]ὁμοίως in 3:1.

Finally the use of τὸ τέλος in an adverbial sense suggests it is the introduction of a fresh point and not simply a summary of what has gone before.

While it is true that 3:9-12 reinforces Peter's exhortation in 2:11-3:6 in a general sense, there are elements which are new. Peter has in mind a specific sphere of social relationships in this concluding section. He is directing his message here to all Christians in their relationships with their non-Christian friends. When Peter exhorts Christians not to return evil for evil or insult for insult, he is advocating a standard of behaviour towards enemies which could be observed and recognised as an ideal of Graeco-Roman society.

However Peter grounds his exhortation by appealing to a distinctively Christian motivation, and his teaching is to this extent different from those of Graeco-Roman writers. Motivation, indeed, forms a crucial part of Peter's advice to Christians in their relationships with non-Christians, and he highlights this point in the final part of this section.

2) Christians and their Non-Christian Friends

In 3:9 Peter recognises that Christians are at the receiving end of insults and abuse. In 4:3-4 he identifies the source of these hostile acts, non-Christians with whom they had jointly participated in activities relating to pagan worship (4:3). We saw in our study of 4:3-4 in Chapter 1 of this thesis that the different words used for these activities relate to social and religious acts which might very well have taken place in association meetings and communal feasts.[11]

In association meetings people who were of the same trade, or who worshipped a particular god, or who belonged to the same funerary society gathered regularly for social activities. These meetings, often held once a month, would usually include a meal and drinking.[12]

The primary aim of such gatherings was social.[13] This was especially significant for those of the lower classes, both free and slave.[14] Although people gathered for social interaction, these meetings would also involve some kind of religious activity, for in Graeco-Roman

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[11]See pp. 29-35.

[12]See pp. 26-27; 34.

[13]The purpose for gathering is "pure comradeship": MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 77.

[14]M.I. Finley, *The Ancient Economy*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974) 138.

society, religion was at the heart of social life.[15] In MacMullen's words,

> For most people, to have a good time with their friends involved some contact with a god who served as guest of honour, as master of ceremonies, or as host in the porticoes or flowering shaded grounds of his own dwelling.[16]

Members of these associations who met regularly would certainly develop some degree of friendship and comradeship among themselves. When some of these members became Christians, they will have ceased to participate in the religious and social activities of the association. Such withdrawal, as noted, shocked and provoked a hostile response from their friends (cf. 4:3-4). I suggest that in 3:9-12 Peter is addressing this issue of Christian response to hostility from their non-Christian friends.

A further factor which supports this view is the way people in the Graeco-Roman world regarded social relationships. As we have noted in Chapter 1, these relationships can be grouped broadly into two categories: relationships within the household, and relationships outside the household. Within the latter category were relationships with friends and neighbours, and relationships in public life, among one's fellow citizens and political allies.[17] Ancient household codes also addressed all three categories of relationships.[18]

As Peter was concerned with the way Christians in Asia Minor related with non-Christians after their conversion, it would be reasonable to expect that he would address these basic categories of social relationships. Peter has addressed Christians as regards their public life (their responsibilities to non-Christian governing authorities and fellow citizens) in 2:13-17, and as regards their life within the household in 2:18-3:6. It is my contention that in this concluding section in 3:9-12, he turns his attention to the third of these relationships, i.e. their relationships with their non-Christian friends.

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[15]R. MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) 40.

[16]MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire*, 40.

[17]See pp. 24-25. See also Cicero, *Fin.* 5.23.65.

[18]In his study of the New Testament idea of social obligation, Edwin Judge examines the NT teaching against the background of three basic social instituiions: the *politeia*, the household/*oikonomia* and unofficial and spontaneous associations/*koinonia*. These categories correspond with the broad categories from Cicero's list of social relationships in the ancient Graeco-Roman world: E.A. Judge, *The Social Pattern of Christian Groups in the First Century* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1960).

3) The Effect of Conversion on Friendship

Friendship was seen as an important part of the social fabric of life in Graeco-Roman society. According to Cicero, "all believe that without friendship life is no life at all, ... for it creeps imperceptibly into every life."[19] Again he says, "Thus nature, loving nothing solitary, always strives for some sort of support, and man's best support is a very dear friend."[20] However Cicero was also very much aware that unless carefully guarded, friendships could be "changed into serious enmities, which are the source of disputes, abuse and invective."[21]

Conversion will have changed friendships into enmities, for it struck at the very heart of social intercourse.[22] When Christians withdrew from their social and religious activities with their non-Christian friends, the latter will have perceived the friendship to have ceased. The consequent hostile reaction from the non-Christians, as described in 4:4, would not have been unusual in that society, where the traditional maxim that one ought to do everything "to help a friend and harm an enemy" ruled.[23] Plutarch describes the vigilant watch of a person over his enemy's activities with the purpose of finding some flaw, which he could use to attack him:

> Your enemy, wide awake, is constantly lying in wait to take advantage of your actions, and seeking to gain some hold on you, keeping up a constant patrol about your life ... your enemy, through every friend and servant and acquaintance as well, so far as possible, plays the detective on your actions and digs his way into your plans and searches them through and through.[24]

To fail to use every opportunity and means to hurt your enemy might render you contemptible in the sight of other people.

How were Christians to respond to the hostility from their non-Christian friends? It would have been natural, and tempting, for them to respond with similar hostility. However, this is precisely what Peter advises them against doing.

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[19]Cicero, *Amic.* 23.86

[20]Cicero, *Amic.* 23.88

[21]Cicero, *Amic.* 21.78.

[22]E.M. Blaiklock, *The Christian in Pagan Society* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1951) 19. See also A.Y. Collins, "Persecution and Vengeance in the Book of Revelation," in D. Hellholm (ed.), *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1983) 740-741.

[23]Aristotle, *Rh.* 2.23.21; Aristophanes, *Av.* 420; Xenophon, *Cyr.* 1.4.25. See Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*, 35-69 for a discussion of enmity in the ancient Graeco-Roman world.

[24]Plutarch, *Mor.* 87B-C.

4) Peter's Exhortation of Non-Retaliation (3:9-12)

a) A Common Paraenetic Tradition?

In 3:9 Peter urges Christians not to "repay evil with evil or insult with insult". Instead they must bless their non-Christian friends and do good to them. This injunction is not unique to 1 Peter. Similar commands are found in Romans 12:17 and 1 Thessalonians 5:15. Piper notes the similarities and differences between these passages, and rightly argues that there is no literary dependence. Both the differences and the "imprecise similarities amidst wide divergences" point to a reliance on a common paraenetic tradition rather than literary dependence.[25]

Piper proceeds to trace the origin of this command of "enemy love", as he calls it, in the common paraenetic tradition. He examines similar teaching on loving one's enemies in Hellenistic philosophy, in the OT, in Hellenistic and Palestinian Judaism, and in Jesus' teaching as recorded in Matthew 5:38-48 and Luke 6:27-36.[26] From his investigation, he concludes that

> as far as the *raw material* of the paraenetic tradition is concerned, the early church did draw from the sayings of Jesus as it did also from the Old Testament and Jewish Hellenistic sources.[27]

While the elements of the paraenetic tradition on enemy love reflect OT and Jewish Hellenistic sources, Jesus' command forms the essence of the tradition. We can see this illustrated in 1 Peter. The injunction not to repay evil with evil is encountered repeatedly in *Joseph and Aseneth*, and appears to be a development of the thought in Proverbs 17:13 ("If a man pays back evil for good, evil will never leave his house"). The exhortation to return evil and insults with blessing is founded on Jesus' command, "Bless those who curse you."[28] The command to do good, which is a predominant theme in 1 Peter, corresponds to Jesus' teaching in Luke 6:27 and 6:35. The same word ἀγαθοποιεῖν, as noted in Chapter 4, is used in both 1 Peter and in Luke. Thus Piper seems justified in his conclusion that Jesus' command to love one's enemy is the "kernel" of the raw material forming the common paraenetic tradition which the early church used.

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[25]J. Piper, *'Love your Enemies': Jesus' Love Command in the Synoptic Gospels and in the Early Christian Paraenesis* (Cambridge: CUP, 1979) 4-18.

[26]Piper, *'Love your Enemies'*, 49-63.

[27]Piper, *'Love Your Enemies'*, 63.

[28]Luke 6:28.

b) For a Specific Purpose

The similarities between 3:9 and Romans 12:17 suggest a reliance on a common paraenetic tradition, but the divergences suggest a different purpose. The phrase common to Romans 12:17 and 3:9 is κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ, which was presumably one of the elements of enemy love in the common paraenetic tradition. 1 Peter expands κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ with λοιδορίαν ἀντὶ λοιδορίας. Michaels thinks that Peter may have been influenced by Paul's contrast of λοιδορούμενοι and εὐλογοῦμεν in 1 Corinthians 4:12, which might have been part of an early catechetical formulation. However he provides no evidence of such literary influence.[29]

A more probable explanation for Peter's addition of λοιδορίαν ἀντὶ λοιδορίας in 3:9 is that he is indeed addressing a situation where Christians are at the receiving end of insults from non-Christians. Other references to verbal abuse can be found in 2:12, 3:16 and 4:3. Michaels' view that Peter's use of λοιδορίαν is attributable to his "apparent fondness for rich and varied vocabulary," as evidenced in the different words to describe the sins of speech in 2:12, 3:16, 4:4 and 4:14, fails to take into consideration the particular situation of Christians who were the target of verbal abuse from non-Christians.[30] We have seen above that such verbal abuse and insults were the usual response when friendships were perceived to have broken down in the ancient world. It is against this background that Peter exhorts Christians to refrain from repaying evil with evil or insult with insult. Instead, he urges, they should bless their non-Christian friends and do good to them.

Peter uses Psalm 34:12-16a (Ps. 33:13-17a LXX) to reinforce his injunction in 3:9.[31] Peter introduces the psalm with γὰρ, which not only serves to merge the quotation with what precedes, but also to explicate and ground the exhortation in 3:9.[32] The question in Psalm 34:12 is abandoned with the deletion of τίς ἐστιν ἄνθρωπος from the first line and the change of the participle ἀγαπῶν to the infinitive ἀγαπᾶν. This change together with the switch from all second person imperatives in the LXX to the third person in 1 Peter is more than just a

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[29]Michaels, 177.

[30]Michaels, 177.

[31]Paul cites five different OT references in Rom. 12:17-20: Prov. 3:4 (12:17b); Ps. 33:15 (12:18); Lev. 19:18 (12:19a); Dt. 32:35 (12:19b); Prov. 25:21f (12:20). The presumption must be that Peter and Paul has selected what is appropriate for their particular situations.

[32]Piper, *'Love Your Enemies'*, 122.

stylistic improvement.[33] It brings the quotation to bear directly on the situation at hand.

The main point in Psalm 34:12-16a is that those who love life and wish to see long days should turn away from evil and deceitful speech and lies. Instead they should do good and pursue peace. In so doing, they will enjoy the favour of God. The redactional ὅτι in 3:12 provides the basis for divine favour. In the same way, Christians in Asia Minor should restrain their tongues from speaking evil and insults to their non-Christian friends who were reviling them. Instead they should bless them and do good. Those who do good find favour with God, while those who do evil will experience God's displeasure.

Literally "to bless" is to speak well of someone, and this is the sense used in Greek literature.[34] In LXX and NT, the word has acquired a distinctly religious meaning, that is, "to extend to that person the prospect of salvation, or the favour of God."[35] In this context Peter might have had both meanings in mind. This gains support from his use of Psalm 34:13-14, which expands on the meaning of "bless." To keep one's tongue from evil does not mean to avoid making rash promises but rather to avoid the malicious use of words which harms others. "To bless" therefore is to refrain from speaking evil or insults or lies, and to do good. It promotes peace and reconciliation rather than alienation.

The psalmist's stress on turning away from evil and deceitful speech and lies to doing good and seeking peace reinforces Peter's injunction in 3:9 to Christians faced with verbal abuse from non-Christians. Christians must keep their tongues from evil and not retaliate with insults. Instead they must respond with blessing and good works. It also underscores the antithesis between κακοποιεῖν (2:16; 3:9) and ἀγαθοποεῖν (2:14, 20; 3:6, 11a) in 1 Peter. It further reaffirms Peter's injunction in 2:11-12 that Christians must restrain their sinful desires and live good lives among non-Christians in the community.

c) Similarities with Graeco-Roman Ideals

In his investigation of the origin of the paraenetic tradition of enemy love in the early church, Piper notes some similarities between Hellenistic philosophy, in particular Stoicism, and Peter's injunction in 3:9. However the presence of essential differences in the motivation

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[33]Schutter, *Hermeneutic and Composition*, 145.

[34]*TDNT* II.754.

[35]Michaels, 178.

between Stoics and Christians leads Piper to reject Hellenistic philosophy as a possible source of enemy love in the common paraenetic tradition. While Piper may be correct in this, we must not dismiss so readily the similarities between Stoicism and 3:9a, for it is precisely these similarities that made Peter's exhortation particularly relevant in the context of hostile relationships between Christians and their non-Christian friends. By exhorting Christians not to repay evil with evil or insult with insult, Peter is urging Christians to conduct themselves in a manner which their non-Christian friends could see and recognise as a high standard of conduct towards one's enemies. 3:9a is thus an outworking of the injunction in 2:12 to live such good lives among non-Christians that the latter could see their good deeds, and change their minds about Christians and the God they worshipped. However Peter is quick to stress that their motivation must differ from that of non-Christians. In this section, I will show the external similarities between Hellenistic philosophy and Petrine teaching on proper conduct towards one's enemies, and in the following section their essential difference.

Graeco-Roman philosophers of the first century CE like Seneca, Epictetus and Plutarch were among those who advocated non-retaliation towards one's enemies. According to Seneca, one should help one's enemies: "We shall never cease to work for the common good, to help each and all, to give aid even to our enemies when our hand is feeble with age."[36] When insulted or treated with unkindness, Seneca advises that "the best course is to reject at once the first incitement to anger, to resist even its small beginnings, and to take pains to avoid falling into anger."[37] Unkindness must be treated with kindness,[38] for it is not honourable to requite injuries with injuries.[39] Seneca cites the example of Marcus Cato who said to the man who struck him, "I do not recall that I received a blow."[40]

Epictetus (55--135 CE), another Stoic, also taught non-retaliation as the proper response to one's enemies:

> Eat as a man, drink as a man, adorn yourself, marry, get children, be active as a citizen; endure revilings, bear with an unreasonable brother, father, son, neighbour, fellow-

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[36]Seneca, *De Otio* 1.4.

[37]Seneca, *Ira* 1.8.1.

[38]Seneca, *Ira* 3.27.4.

[39]Seneca, *Ira* 2.32.1.

[40]Seneca, *Ira* 2.32.2. See also *Ira* 3.38.2 for another example of non-retaliation by Cato.

traveller.[41]

Plutarch also espoused a similar philosophy. According to him, there is nothing more dignified and noble than to maintain a calm demeanour when one is reviled by the enemy.[42] If one wishes to distress one's enemy, one must not revile him in return. Instead, one must "show self-control, be truthful, and treat with kindness and justice those who have to deal with you."[43] Thus we see that Peter's injunction to Christians in Asia Minor not to return evil for evil or insult for insult but with blessing and good deeds corresponds to the high standards of Graeco-Roman society as reflected in the teachings of first century CE philosophers.

There is another important similarity between 1 Peter and the Graeco-Roman philosophers regarding enemy love which is significant for our study. Both Peter and Graeco-Roman philosophers assume that actions will be observed and judged by others. The writings of Seneca and Plutarch presuppose that onlookers will see and recognise that non-retaliation towards one's enemies is good and honourable and respectable conduct, which deserve commendation.

Seneca anticipates the objection that those who do not repay evil with evil and insult with insult may be perceived by others as weak and ineffectual: "'But the populace,' you say, 'admires a spirited action, and the bold are held in honour while quiet people are considered ineffective.'"[44] He answers this objection:

> Perhaps so, at first sight. But when these have proved by the even tenor of their lives that they show, not inaction, but peace of mind, that same public will reverence and respect them.[45]

Thus people in the community will respect and honour the one who refrains from retaliating against his abusers.

Seneca cites the example of Philip, who had acquired an honourable and worthy reputation, for he did not retaliate when he was insulted.[46] Seneca recommends him as an

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[41]Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.21.5.

[42]Plutarch, *Mor.* 90D.

[43]Plutarch, *Mor.* 88C.

[44]Seneca, *Ira* 3.41.2.

[45]Seneca, *Ira* 3.41.2-3.

[46]Having granted a friendly hearing to a delegation of envoys from the Athenians, Philip said, "Tell me what I can do that will please the Athenians." Democharés, a man with a bold and impudent tongue, replied, "Hang yourself." While all the bystanders were indignant at this rudeness and his brutal words, Philip bade

example to be recalled to mind when one is aroused to anger: "Whenever a man is provoked, therefore let him say to himself, "Am I more mighty than Philip? Yet he was cursed and did not retaliate."[47]

Plutarch is also concerned with how one's response to one's enemies is perceived by others. According to him, people will have affection and honour for one who ~~do~~ does not revile in return, but show self-control, truthfulness and kindness.[48] They will commend his goodness when they see him showing compassion for an enemy in affliction, giving him a helping hand when he is in need, displaying some concern for his children, and his household when they are in difficulties.[49] Only a man who has a "black heart" will fail to recognise these good works of a man towards his enemy.[50]

As we have noted earlier, Plutarch advises that the way to defend oneself against one's enemy is to show oneself to be "good and honourable."[51]

> `How shall I defend myself against my enemy?' `By proving yourself good and honourable.' What, think you, would be their state of mind if you were to show yourself to be an honest, sensible man and a useful citizen, of high repute in speech, clean in actions, orderly in living.[52]

One must aim to outdo one's enemies in diligence, goodness, magnanimity, kindly deeds, and good works. Plutarch gives other examples of doing good: his advice to commend one's enemies would be an example of "blessing" one's enemy.[53]This conduct can be observed by others in the community and judged to be good and honourable. It will have the effect of silencing one's enemies.[54]

Here as elsewhere in 1 Peter, the impact of one's actions on others in the community is

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them to keep quiet and allowed Democharès to withdraw safe and unharmed.

[47]Seneca, *Ira* 3.23.2-3.

[48]Plutarch, *Mor.* 88C.

[49]Plutarch, *Mor.* 90F.

[50]Such positive actions towards the enemy clearly contradict Piper's view that the key word "blessing" in 3:9 is missing from the Stoic context: J. Piper, "Hope as the Motivation of Love: 1 Peter 3:9-12," *NTS* 26 (1980) 220.

[51]Plutarch, *Mor.* 88B.

[52]Plutarch, *Mor.* 88B.

[53]Plutarch, *Mor.* 91B.

[54]See 1 Pet. 2:15.

an important factor in Peter's exhortation. When Christians do good to their non-Christian friends who insult them, they will show themselves to be good and honourable, and others will acknowledge this and respect them (cf. 2:12; 20; 3:6). However the motivation of Christians in behaving this way was to be different from that of Graeco-Roman philosophers. We will consider the issue of motivation next.

d) Differences from Graeco-Roman Ideals

For Graeco-Roman philosophers, character-development is a major motivation for refraining from retaliating against one's enemies. According to Plutarch, one should look at one's enemies to see if one can profit by them.[55] One's response to the enemy can be part of the process of training one's character.[56] Learning to bear an enemy's abuse in silence is also good training for building up one's tolerance to unreasonable people. Thus, according to Plutarch, if you can bear an enemy's abuse in silence, you will "very easily bear up under a wife's attack when she rails at you, and without discomposure will patiently hear the most bitter utterances of a friend or a brother."[57]

Similarly Epictetus teaches that one can learn from the reviler. To the question whether one can derive any good from the man who reviles, his answer is, "The very greatest. So also my reviler becomes one who prepares me for my contest; he exercises my patience, my dispassionateness, my gentleness."[58]

To Seneca, the motivation for non-retaliation is to show oneself to be invulnerable to either injury or insult. This is the mark of a great and wise man: "There is no surer proof of greatness than to be in a state where nothing can possibly happen to disturb you."[59] One will not retaliate when one cannot or ~~do~~ does not feel the impact of injuries or insults. It is only "a petty and sorry person who will bite back when he is bitten."[60] It is this very personalised motivation that led Sevenster, in his study of Seneca's view on how a man should behave towards his

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[55]Plutarch, *Mor.* 86E.

[56]Plutarch, *Mor.* 91B.

[57]Plutarch, *Mor.* 90D.

[58]Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.20.9. See also 3.12.10; 4.5.8-9.

[59]Seneca, *Ira* 3.6.1.

[60]Seneca, *Ira* 2.34.1.

enemies, to conclude that Seneca was really interested in "individual and not social ethics."[61]

On the other hand, the motivation for Christians to refrain from retaliation is distinctly different. While Graeco-Roman philosophers stress character training and the cultivation of invulnerability to external circumstances, Peter emphasises God's calling and the promise of blessing from God for obedience.

The phrase εἰς τοῦτο ἐκλήθητε in 3:9 refers to what precedes, that is, μὴ ἀποδιδόντες κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ ἢ λοιδορίαν ἀντὶ λοιδορίας, rather than to what follows in the ἵνα clause.[62] Thus Christians must bless those who revile them because they had been called to do this in order that they might inherit a blessing from God. This view is to be preferred because the phrase εἰς τοῦτο ἐκλήθητε echoes 2:21a, where τοῦτο refers to what precedes, that is, Christian slaves must do good even though they had to suffer for so doing.[63] The parallel with 2:21a is closer than that with 4:6, where τοῦτο has been taken by some to refer to what follows.[64]

The view that τοῦτο refers to what precedes can also be supported by the context. Piper has rightly argued that Peter's introduction of Psalm 34:12-16a with γὰρ (3:10) is "an expansion and restatement of the argumentation in 3:9."[65] According to the psalm, those who desire to love life and see good days must keep their tongues from evil. This echoes 3:9, in that those who desire to inherit a blessing must bless those who revile them. Peter's redactional ὅτι in 3:12 brings out his intention: one must refrain from evil and do good precisely because (ὅτι) the Lord is for the righteous and against those who do evil. Again this corresponds to 3:9, in that one must bless those who revile because one's inheritance from the Lord depends on it. Thus the motivation for Christians to refrain from retaliation is the calling of God,[66] and this differs greatly from that advocated by high-minded members of Graeco-Roman society in the first century CE.

Another aspect of motivation in 3:9-12 which finds no parallel in Graeco-Roman

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[61]J.N.Sevenster, "Paul and Seneca," *Supplements to Novum Testamentum* 4 (1961) 183.

[62]Piper, *'Love Your Enemies'*, 123-125; Michaels, 178; Achtemeier, 224.

[63]See p. 165.

[64]For the second view, see Goppelt, 234; Kelly, 137; Selwyn, 190.

[65]Piper, *'Love Your Enemies'*, 124.

[66]See also 1:15.

philosophers is that of reward for obedience. Christians who exercise non-retaliation and repay evil with good will inherit a blessing from God. κληρονομήσητε in 3:9b recalls κληρονομίαν in 1:4, which interprets inheritance as eternal and heavenly salvation which would be revealed at the coming of Christ. Thus the reward of inheriting a blessing from God is eschatological in character.

The view that Christians will inherit a blessing from God if they obey the paraenetic commands is seen elsewhere in 1 Peter. For example, in 4:13, Christians are encouraged to rejoice when they suffer so that (ἵνα) they can rejoice when the glory of Jesus Christ is revealed. The sequence of thought is the same as in 3:9, where the promise of future inheritance is given to Christians who will bless those who revile them.[67]

5) Summary

In the first part of this chapter, we examined 3:9-12 and saw that this addressed social relationships between Christians and their non-Christian friends. We saw too that Peter's exhortation to the addressees not to repay evil with evil but with blessing has parallels in the Graeco-Roman ethic of non-retaliation towards enemies. However the motivation set out by Peter is different from that expounded by the Graeco-Roman philosophers. People in Graeco-Roman society would recognise such conduct as praiseworthy. By his injunction in 3:9-12, Peter is encouraging Christians not to withdraw totally from their social relationships with non-Christians in order to avoid hostility from their non-Christian friends. Rather they must remain in their social relationships with their friends and neighbours and associates, even though they can not join them in activities which they now consider incompatible with their Christian faith. In the words of MacMullen,

> simply as neighbours, they were naturally everywhere. Being excluded from the normal social gatherings, their points of contact with non-Christians lay quite inevitably at street-corners, or at places of employment, or in the working quarters of dwellings.[68]

It is in these places that Christians must return blessing and good works for hostility and abuse from their non-Christian friends. It is their calling from God, and in so doing, they will inherit

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[67]See also 5:5b, 6. However this view of a future promise conditional on present obedience does not contradict Peter's theology of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ: Piper, *'Love Your Enemies'*, 125-126.

[68]R. MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire (A.D. 100-400)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984) 40.

blessing from God.

However this blessing from God does not mean a life free from hostility and conflict with non-Christians, as we will see in 3:13-17 and 4:12-19. In the next chapter, we will examine the relationship between doing good and suffering.

CHAPTER 9

DOING GOOD AND SUFFERING

(3:13-17; 4:12-19)

Thus far we have examined the various relationships between Christians and non-Christians addressed in 2:13-3:6 and 3:9-12. We have seen the dilemmas and tensions which Christians faced in these relationships, and have considered Peter's exhortation to them to remain within the relationships and to do good. When Christians in Asia Minor did good to their non-Christian governing authorities and fellow citizens, masters, husbands and friends, what response might they expect? This issue is explicitly raised by Peter's rhetorical question in 3:13, which forms the first part of this chapter. In the second part, we will examine the relationship between doing good and suffering.

1) Expectation of "No Harm"

Most Petrine scholars do not view 3:13 against a precise first century socio-historical setting. Even Achtemeier, in his critical and historical commentary on 1 Peter, makes no comment about the possible socio-historical background of this verse. Like many others, he connects 3:13 to the preceding passage, arguing that Peter's use of Psalm 34:12-16a serves as the link between the two. Thus according to Achtemeier, "to be zealous for the good means to walk under the benevolent gaze of God."[1] Michaels too sees the καὶ in 3:13 as introducing a conclusion to be drawn from verse 12: "If God is on the side of the righteous and against those who do evil, what harm can possibly come to those who do good?"[2]

Both Achtemeier and Michaels proceed to reconcile this "no harm" view with 3:14a: ἀλλ' εἰ καὶ πάσχοιτε διὰ δικαιοσύνην. Achtemeier sees unjust suffering in 3:14a as "an apparent exception" to the "no harm" premise. He argues that 3:13 does not deny the presence of social persecution, but rather that the main point is that such persecution cannot deprive them of the

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[1]Achtemeier, 229.

[2]Michaels, 185.

divine favour shown them in Jesus Christ.[3] Michaels sees verse 14 not as a contrast to the assurance of "no harm" in the preceding verse, but as a reinforcement of that assurance. The promise of safety from harm in verse 13 corresponds to the reference to blessedness in verse 14a, and as such it does not rule out the possibility of innocent suffering.[4]

However the view taken by Achtemeier and Michaels assumes that there is an immediate link between verses 12 and 13. This assumption cannot stand for the following reasons. First, 3:12 is part of a quotation from LXX, which forms the basis for Peter's injunction of non-retaliation in 3:9. We saw earlier that 3:9-12 is the concluding part of a larger paraenetic section beginning at 2:11 and ending at 3:12, in which Peter is primarily concerned with social relationships between Christians and non-Christians.[5] 3:13 must be seen as a comment following on from the whole paraenetic section in 2:11-3:12. τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ in 3:13 recalls the predominant theme of "doing good" in 2:11-3:12 (2:12,15,20; 3:6,11).

Secondly, ποιοῦντας κακά in verse 12 does not correspond to ὁ κακώσων in 3:13, which denotes possible opponents of Christians.[6] 3:9-12 is addressed to Christians who, in the words of the psalmist, "must refrain from evil and do good". The reason for refraining from evil and doing good is introduced with the redactional ὅτι in verse 12. Those who do good gain God's favour while those who do evil are visited with God's disfavour. In this context, ποιοῦντας κακά refers to those who refuse to do good in verses 10 and 11. Thus when Christians repay evil with evil or insult with insult, they will not receive God's favour. This must be distinguished from ὁ κακώσων in 3:13, which clearly has a non-Christian hurling insults at Christians in view.

Thirdly, Peter's omission of Psalm 34:16b, "to cut off the memory of them from the earth," further supports the view that 3:13 is not immediately linked to 3:12. It makes good sense to leave out this part of the verse if Peter is referring to God's disapproval of disobedient Christians in 3:12 rather than the final judgement of evil doers.

From the above, we see that Peter's rhetorical question in 3:13 does not flow directly from the preceding verse, but from the whole paraenetic section in 2:11-3:12, in which he is

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[3]Achtemeier, 230.

[4]Michaels, 185.

[5]See pp. 196-202.

[6]Schutter, *Hermeneutic and Composition*, 147.

primarily concerned to instruct Christians on their social relationships with non-Christians.

In Part II of this thesis, I have set these social relationships against their socio-historical background, and examined the meaning of doing good in Graeco-Roman society. We saw that in that setting, good works were commended and it was expected that benefits conferred would be returned. The failure to return a benefit was looked upon as a disgrace.[7] People in the ancient world also believed that no harm would come upon a good man. In the words of Plato, "no harm can befall a good man, either when he is alive or when he is dead, and the gods do not neglect his cause."[8]

Thus it would have been reasonable for Christians in Asia Minor to expect that their good works towards non-Christians would be recognised and judged to be good, and reciprocated, perhaps resulting in the cessation of hostilities and abuse from them. Good citizens, good slaves and good wives were all recognised and given due praise. In such an environment, it would be natural for Peter to ask rhetorically: "Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?" The answer would be a resounding, "No one!"

However, for Peter to declare that those who do good will receive no harm because of the divine favour of God upon them would seem unrealistically triumphalist, in view of his addressees' current experience of hostility from non-Christians. Peter himself concedes that Christians will not be immune from suffering on account of their doing good.[9] He is aware that not everyone conforms to the conventions governing social reciprocity in Graeco-Roman society. How, then, should Christians respond to suffering for doing good? Before dealing with this issue, I will first examine briefly the view that suffering is treated as a remote contingency in 3:13-17, and not a present reality.

2) Suffering in 3:14-17: A Remote Contingency?

The use of the optative πάσχοιτε in 3:14 and θέλοι in 3:17 has led some scholars to see suffering in this passage as a remote contingency.[10] This is because traditionally grammarians

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[7]Seneca, *Ben.* 3.1.1.

[8]Plato, *Ap.* 41d.

[9]See also 2:20; 4:14-16,19.

[10]Davids, 130. See also Best, 163.

have held that the presence of the optative denotes contingency or a degree of doubt.[11] This appears to contradict the reality of the suffering described in 4:12-19.

This apparent inconsistency has given rise to various explanations by scholars: that Peter was referring to two different periods in the life of the churches in Asia Minor; that 3:14-17 belongs to a different document which was composed at a different time;[12] that the two passages were intended for different readers.[13]

Other scholars have acknowledged the uncertainty and potentiality of the optative mood but have sought to explain it in ways which allow them to maintain real suffering is in view in 1 Peter. For instance, Zerwick thinks that Peter uses the optative mood to put the matter of suffering on a theoretical plane. He does this out of tact, for he knows that sufferings are "eminently probable in the Christian life, and indeed perhaps already a reality for his readers."[14]

Achtemeier believes that the optative reflects a situation of real but of sporadic persecution. Christians were not undergoing continuous suffering, and while Peter knew that persecution was always a threat, he did not know whether they were experiencing suffering at the time of his writing.[15]

However the apparent inconsistency exists only if we accept that the use of the optative connotes a situation of contingency or doubt.[16] More recently it has been argued that the conditional construction using the optative does not make any statement about the facts of the matter, about whether something in reality was true or not.[17] According to Porter, the use of the optative does not mean that what is stated is not true or cannot be true, "but only that for the sake of the argument which uses this construction this question is held in abeyance."[18] The truth of the matter must be determined from the context. How might this approach apply to

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[11]F. Blass, A. Debrunner & R.W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961) 194-195.

[12]Best, 24.

[13]Best, 24.

[14]M.Zerwick, *Biblical Greek* (ET: Rome: Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1963) 111. This view is followed by Beare.

[15]Achtemeier, 230-231.

[16]See C.F.D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (2nd ed.; Cambridge: CUP, 1959) 150.

[17]S.E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992) 255.

[18]Porter, *Idioms*, 255.

the use of the optative in 3:14 and 3:17?

In the context of 3:13-17, the optative is used, not to suggest the remote contingency of suffering, but to strengthen the rhetorical question in verse 13. Thus the relevant point here is not whether suffering was a remote contingency or a present reality. Rather Peter, having asked rhetorically, Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? develops his point in what follows.

Peter is aware that non-retaliation will not always evoke a positive response, in which case Christians will have to suffer. It is to respond to this situation in a rhetorically effective manner that Peter uses the optative: he reassures Christians that *even if they suffer*, they are blessed.

When we consider the context of the entire letter, we see that Peter portrays a situation of present suffering. He introduces the subject of suffering as early as 1:6. While this may be a general statement concerning suffering, the use of ἄρτι and the aorist λυπηθέντες points to suffering being a reality rather than a mere contingency.[19] The reality of suffering is also clear in 4:4, when Christians find themselves at the receiving end of abuse and hostility.

In 4:12 the reality of suffering is clear. There is no evidence that the situation has recently deteriorated in 4:12. In 4:12-19 Peter tells Christians not to be surprised at the painful trial they are suffering. The present participle γινομένῃ is used. Since the publication of his article in 1966/67, Michaels has come round to the view that there is no intensification of the urgency in 4:12.[20] He writes:

> Although it has often been suggested that there is an intensification or a heightening of the urgency between 4:11 and 4:12 (as if Peter had just heard of a sudden crisis or disaster), there is no real evidence of this. The urgency expressed already in 1:6-8 is firm evidence to the contrary. The difference in tone between 1:6-8 and 4:12-19, on the one hand, and most of 2:11-4:6, on the other, is the difference between a rhetorical summary of the Christian community's position in a hostile world and a series of directives on how to respond to specific aggravations or challenges.[21]

Likewise in 5:9, Peter alludes to Christians in other parts of the world undergoing the same kind of suffering. Again, present, real suffering seems to be in view.

Finally, in its more immediate context, 3:16 speaks of present suffering in the form of

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[19]Michaels, 28; Kelly, 6.

[20]Michaels, p. 258. In his article "Eschatology in 1 Pet iii.17," *NTS* 13 (1966/67) 394-401, Michaels held the view that there was a heightening of the urgency of suffering in 4:12 (see 399-400).

[21]Michaels, 258.

malicious slander against the good lives of Christians. In response, Peter urges Christians to be ready to give an answer for the hope within them. This hardly fits with the view that Peter in the same passage regards suffering as a remote contingency.

From the above we see that the context of the whole letter, and in particular the immediate context of 3:13-17, shows that suffering in 1 Peter is not a remote contingency but a present reality, notwithstanding the use of the optative in 3:14-17.

We turn now to the issue of Christian response to suffering for doing good. In Chapter 1 of this thesis, we have seen that the suffering of Christians had not come to them at the instigation of any government official. Rather it was the hostility of their non-Christian fellow citizens, non-Christian masters, non-Christian husbands and non-Christian friends which was the cause of suffering for Christians. They had to endure wrongful accusations, malicious slander, ridicule and insults from non-Christians in their community.

Peter counsels Christians to respond to such hostility by doing good to non-Christians. As we have seen earlier, it would have been natural for people in Graeco-Roman society to expect something good in return for the good which they had done. Christians in Asia Minor might have expected that doing good would do away with all or some of the hostility. But Peter was realistic enough to know that this would not be the case, for even in their society there were some who did not respond according to social convention.

How should Christians respond to suffering? First, Peter was emphatic that they should suffer for doing good and not for doing evil. Secondly, he encourages them to continue to do good, even when they have to suffer. I will turn now to deal with these two points.

3) Suffering for Doing Good and Not for Doing Evil

In 3:13-17 and 4:12-19 where Peter turns his attention to suffering, he is very insistent that Christians should suffer for the right reason. They should suffer for doing good and not for doing evil. In 3:14 he states that their good works should display δικαιοσύνη, and in 3:16 he describes their good works as ἐν χριστῷ. These two terms, "righteousness" and "in Christ" are not used here in the Pauline sense. They qualify the good works that Christians are to do towards non-Christians.[22] This is reiterated in 4:14; if Christians should suffer, they should do so for the name of Christ (4:14), or as Christians (4:16). In 3:17 Peter asserts unequivocally

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[22]Michaels, 190.

that "it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil."

Michaels, however, has problems with the view that 3:17 presents two options of good works and evil works for Christians. He thinks that 3:17 must be viewed from an eschatological perspective, and that the distinction in 3:17 is one "between two groups that comprise the whole human race: 'doers of good' who may have to suffer in this age, and 'doers of evil' who will suffer in the next."[23] It is better to belong to the former than the latter. In Michaels' words:

> V 17 is thus to be taken not as a word of admonition (i.e., make sure, when you suffer, that it is for doing good and not for doing evil), but as a word of assurance (i.e., remember, when you suffer, that you are infinitely better off than the evildoers who oppress you).[24]

Michaels gives three reasons for his view. First, without the eschatological perspective, 3:17 is reduced to a mere truism: it is saying nothing more than that good is better than evil.

Secondly, he refers to W. Zimmerli's study of the "better"-proverb or *Tobspruch* in OT wisdom literature. Michaels identifies "better"-proverbs in the NT, and notes that in the Synoptic tradition, these proverbs are characteristically used to set forth eschatological alternatives. For example, it is better to enter the kingdom of God minus an eye or a limb than to escape such mutilation and be sent away to eternal fire. In his view, 3:17 falls into this same category, and therefore expresses an eschatological perspective.

Thirdly, Michaels uses the context to buttress his argument. In 3:10-12, where Peter quotes Psalm 34:12-16, two groups can be clearly distinguished, *viz.*, the righteous upon whom God looks with favour, and the evildoers against whom God turns his face. Michaels argues that a similar perspective underlies v. 17: humankind is divided into two groups, doers of good who may have to suffer in this age, and doers of evil who will surely suffer in the age to come.

While it cannot be doubted that the eschatological perspective is important in 1 Peter, I suggest that 3:17 can be read as an admonition to Christians in Asia Minor which primarily has the present world in view when they suffer: they must do so for doing good and not for doing evil. In response to Michaels' first argument that this reduces 3:17 to a truism, it must be noted that Peter's assertion in 3:17 is reinforcing a central concern of the letter: do good;

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[23]Michaels, 192. See also Michaels "Eschatology," 394-401.

[24]Michaels, 192.

refrain from doing evil. The theme of doing good and refraining from evil runs through the entire letter. In 1:14 Peter urges Christians not to conform to the evil desires which they have before their conversion. Again in 2:1 Christians are encouraged to get rid of all evil deeds of malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander. In 2:11 he again stresses that Christians should abstain from their sinful desires. Instead they should live such good lives that non-Christians in their community can see their good works and glorify God on the day he visits (2:11-12).

This theme of refraining from evil and doing good is also evident in the discussion of the social relationships in 2:13-3:12. In 2:16 Peter counsels Christians not to use their freedom as a cover-up for evil against their fellow citizens and the governing authorities. Instead they must do good (2:15). Christian slaves are reminded that there is no credit when they receive a beating for doing wrong. When they suffer, it should be for doing good and not for doing wrong (2:20). Christian wives are urged to do good to their non-Christian husbands (3:6). In 3:9 Peter entreats Christians not to repay evil with evil or insult with insult but with good. This leads to his firm assertion in 3:17 that it is better "to suffer for doing good than for doing evil". These references in the letter clearly show that Peter is very concerned that Christians in Asia Minor should refrain from evil and do good, and be seen to be doing so, even if that meant suffering for doing good.

With regard to Michaels' second argument, it is not clear why we should read 3:17 in the way the "better"-proverbs in the Synoptic tradition are read. It would perhaps be more relevant to read it against similar maxims in the Graeco-Roman world, like Cicero's statement that "It is better to submit to outrage than to commit it."[25] Three centuries earlier, Plato (429-347 BCE) expressed a similar sentiment: "But to do wrong is worse, in the same degree as it is fouler, than to suffer it ..."[26]

Michaels' final argument relates to the context of 3:17, in particular Peter's use of Psalm 34:12-16 in the preceding section. However a central thought in the quoted passage is also the injunction to turn away from evil and to do good (3:11). That is, the quotation fits a non-eschatological interpretation of 3:17 as well as an eschatological one.

Thus when Christians suffer, it should be for doing good. By contrast, in 4:15-16 Peter lists the wrong reasons for suffering. Christians should not suffer ὡς φονεὺς ἢ κλέπτης ἢ

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[25]Cicero, *Tusc. Dis.* 5.56.

[26]Plato, *Grg.* 508B.

κακοποιὸς ἢ ὡς ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος (4:15-16). What is Peter's intention of listing these four groups of people? Is there a common denominator among them? All four groups are, of course, wrongdoers. In my view the common factor among them is the shame and disgrace, and the consequent alienation that they bring upon themselves in the eyes of society when they commit these wrongs. Peter's intention in listing these four groups of people is to caution Christians against conducting themselves in a manner which will bring shame and disgrace, and consequently alienation from non-Christians in society. It reinforces his earlier injunction that Christians should suffer for doing good and not for doing evil.

It is clear that a murderer, a thief or a criminal/wrongdoer are those who have contravened the law of the land, and ought therefore to be punished accordingly. This is the role of the emperor and the governing authorities in 2:13-14. Punishment brings contempt upon wrongdoers.[27]

There is therefore an element of shame and disgrace attached to perpetrators of crimes. In his speech defending Rabirius on a charge of murder, Cicero spoke of the shame and disgrace that attended conviction: "How grievous a thing it is to be disgraced by a public court; how grievous to suffer a fine, how grievous to suffer banishment."[28] In the Graeco-Roman world, *Infamia* or public disgrace was visited upon people convicted of certain crimes. One of these crimes was theft.[29] Thus it would appear that a common denominator among murderers, thieves and criminals, apart from their common liability for judicial punishment, was the shame and disgrace that attended them.

What is not so clear is Peter's use of ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος. This word is found only here in the NT and it is not attested in earlier Greek literature. Various suggestions have been made as to its meaning.[30] Later Christian writers took ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος to mean "the one who meddles in things which do not concern him."[31] In my view this meaning fits the context best.

Like murderers and thieves, meddlers also evoked shame and dishonour in the eyes of

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[27]M. Hengel, *Crucifixion* (ET; London: SCM Press, 1977) 50. In this context, Hengel was discussing crucifixion, but it would have been the same for other types of punishment as well.

[28]Cicero, *Rab. Post.* 16. I owe this reference to Hengel.

[29]Lewis & Reinhold, *Roman Civilization*, 547.

[30]*BAGD* 40; *TDNT* II.621.

[31]Tertullian, *Scrop.* 12; Cyprian, *Test.* 3.37. See also G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961) 77.

Graeco-Roman society. In his essay *On Being a Busybody*, Plutarch spells out clearly the way in which a busybody or a meddler was regarded in his society in the first century CE.[32] He likens the busybody to "a piercing wind," stripping off "not only the mantles and tunics of those near him, but also their very walls." He flings the door open, and "creeps in, searching out with slanderous intent drunken revels and dances and all-night festivals." Busybodies "spend their time digging into other men's trifling correspondence, glueing their ears to their neighbours' walls, whispering with slaves and women of the streets."[33]

According to Plutarch, the activities of the meddler always incite infamy, and often incur danger.[34] Thus busybodies are regarded as people of ill-repute in ancient society. Such persons are avoided.[35] They are hated and loathed by everyone.[36]

The disapproval against meddlers was so strong that Epictetus had to defend the Cynics, whose activities were so similar to that of meddlers that they too had aroused distaste in the people. According to Epictetus, the duty of a Cynic

> is to oversee (ἐπισκοπεῖν) the rest of men; those who have married; those who have had children; who is treating his wife well, and who ill; who quarrels; what household is stable, and what not; making his rounds like a physician and feeling pulses.[37]

Such a man, Epictetus insists, is neither a busybody nor a meddler, "for he is not meddling in other people's affairs when he is overseeing the actions of men, but these are his proper concern."[38] Epictetus argues that the Cynic's motive is pure because his duty is to oversee the affairs of men. He is different from the meddler in Plutarch's essay, who is only interested in "the most evil stories" and "gruesome tales."[39] Notwithstanding the difference in their motives, the behaviour of both the Cynic and the meddler would provoke hostility and alienation from people in the community.

Thus the meddler evoked a similar kind of reaction in the eyes of the public as that of a

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[32]Plutarch, *Mor.* 515-523. C f. Epictetus, *Discourses*, 3.22.97.

[33]Plutarch, *Mor.* 519F.

[34]Plutarch, *Mor.* 519F.

[35]Plutarch, *Mor.* 519D.

[36]Plutarch, *Mor.* 523B.

[37]Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.22.72. Plutarch also knew of those who, like physicians, called at houses and inquire "whether a man had an abscess in the anus or a woman a cancer in the womb!" (*Mor.* 518D).

[38]Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.22.97.

[39]Plutarch, *Mor.* 517E; 518A.

murderer, a thief or a wrongdoer/criminal. They were people of ill-repute, bringing infamy or shame upon themselves by their wrong deeds. In 4:15-16 Peter stresses that when Christians suffer, they should not do so from doing any act which would cause the public to look upon them with the same disapproval as they would upon murderers, thieves, criminals or meddlers. Christians must maintain high standards of conduct which could be recognised as good in society. If Christians were to suffer at all, they must suffer for doing good, or for the name of Christ or as Christians (4:14,16). When they suffer in this way, they should not be ashamed (4:16), for they had not done anything evil or wrong.

In exhorting Christians in Asia Minor to refrain from evil and to do good, and to be willing to suffer for doing good, Peter again shows his awareness of the conventions of Graeco-Roman society and the need for Christians to conduct themselves in a manner that would earn the respect and goodwill of non-Christians. His counsel to Christians in Asia Minor concerning suffering for doing good finds some parallels in Graeco-Roman society.

People in Graeco-Roman society were familiar with suffering.[40] The manner in which one faced suffering was held to be important.[41] It was virtuous and praiseworthy to endure pain with patience and courage. According to Cicero,

> it is universally agreed then, not merely by the learned but by the unlearned as well, that it is characteristic of men who are brave, high-spirited, enduring, and superior to human vicissitudes to suffer pain with patience; nor was there anyone, we said, who did not think that the man who suffered in this spirit was deserving of praise.[42]

It was the mark of a great man to triumph over hardships in life.[43]

If it was praiseworthy to endure pain with patience and courage, it was thought royal or kingly to suffer abuse when one had done good. Plutarch records the words of Alexander the Great when he learnt that he was being maligned by a certain man: "It is kingly to be ill spoken of for doing good."[44] Epictetus cites the example of Antisthenes, who spoke in a similar vein:

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[40]J. Adam, "Ancient Greek Views of Suffering and Grief," in A.M. Adam (ed.), *The Vitality of Platonism and Other Essays* (Cambridge: CUP, 1911) 190-212.

[41]Seneca, *Prov.* 2.4. For a discussion of the educational value of suffering in ancient Greco-Roman society, see C.H. Talbert, *Learning Through Suffering: The Educational Value of Suffering in the New Testament and in its Milieu* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1991) 17-21.

[42]Cicero, *Tusc. Dis.* 2.18.43. See also 2.22.53 and 2.24.58.

[43]Seneca, *Prov.* 4.1.

[44]Plutarch, *Mor.* 181F.

"What, then, says Antisthenes? Have you never heard? `It is the lot of a king, O Cyrus, to do well but to be ill spoken of.'"[45]

From the above, we see that, according to Graeco-Roman convention, it was deplorable to do evil or to act unrighteously. It was better to suffer under such treatment than to perpetrate it. It was also commendable and a sign of greatness to suffer for doing good. Thus when Peter encourages Christians in Asia Minor to refrain from doing evil and to do good, and to be willing to suffer for doing good, he is advocating a standard of conduct which could be recognised as good and commendable in the eyes of society.

When Christians suffer for doing good, they should continue to do good. We turn now to examine this.

4) Continue to Do Good when Suffering

In 3:13-17 and 4:12-19, apart from dealing with the right and wrong reasons for suffering, Peter also considers the issue of the appropriate response to suffering for doing good. He treats this issue at two levels, a personal level and an inter-personal level.

On a personal level, when Christians suffer for doing good, they are blessed (3:14; 4:14).[46] μακάριοι is one of three words in Greek connoting happiness, the other two being εὐλογητός and εὐδαίμων.[47] It often has religious connotation, in that recipients feel a deep joy knowing that they enjoy special divine favour from God.[48] But blessedness does not mean that Christians are free from suffering and harm.[49] Michaels is of the view that the purpose of ἀλλὰ in 3:14 is not to set up a contrast to the assurance of "no harm" in verse 13, but rather to reinforce that assurance with the promise of blessedness in verse 14.[50] In my view ἀλλὰ heightens the contrast between the expectation of "no harm" in 3:13 and the discussion of present suffering in 3:14-17. While the normal expectation in Graeco-Roman society was that

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[45]Epictetus, *Discourses* 4.6.20. See also Diogenes Laertius 6.3.

[46]See Matt. 5:10.

[47]Selwyn, 192.

[48]Michaels, 186.

[49]Beare's view is that there is no harm in the ultimate sense, for the only real "harm" is that "which touches the inner life, attacking the integrity of the personality", and this is not within the power of man to do: Beare, 163. See also Best, 132.

[50]Michaels, 185.

one received a benefit in return for a benefit rendered, there were occasions when one might suffer harm instead.

In the light of the reality of suffering Peter encourages Christians in Asia Minor not to be fearful in 3:15. Here he quotes from Isaiah 8:12 LXX, changing αὐτοῦ to αὐτῶν. In Isaiah 8:12 the prophet is warned by Yahweh not to follow the way of the people. He must not fear what they fear. In changing αὐτοῦ to αὐτῶν, Peter is encouraging his readers not to fear the non-Christians who maliciously abuse them (3:16). Instead of fearing people, Christians must acknowledge Christ as holy in their hearts (3:15). It is this inward acknowledgement of Christ's holiness that must accompany their defence of their faith to non-Christians (3:15).

Thus when Christians suffer for doing good, they must rejoice for they are blessed (4:13-14).[51] They must not be ashamed of their suffering (4:16),[52] but they must commit themselves to God who is their faithful creator (4:19).

On an inter-personal level, Christians must continue to do good to non-Christians while they suffer (4:19). ἐν in 4:19 can be taken instrumentally as "by" or in a temporal sense as "while".[53] In this context I would agree with Michaels in choosing the second option. Christians must entrust their lives to God while they continue to do good.

Peter's exhortation to suffering Christians in Asia Minor to continue to do good corresponds again to the ideals of Graeco-Roman society. According to Seneca, one must continue to bestow benefits, even when the recipient fails to reciprocate:

> No matter what the issue of former benefits has been, still persist in conferring them upon others; this will be better even if they fall unheeded into the hands of the ungrateful, for it may be that either shame or opportunity or example will some day make these grateful. Do not falter, finish your task, and complete the role of the good man. Help one man with money, another with credit, another with influence, another with advice, another with sound precepts. Even wild beasts are sensible of good offices, and no creature is so savage that it will not be softened by kindness and made to love the hand that gives it.[54]

One must be persistent, for

> persistent goodness wins over bad men, and no one of them is so hardhearted and hostile to kindly treatment as not to love a good man even while they wrong him, when even the

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[51]See Seneca, *Prov.* 4.4: "Great men rejoice oft-times in adversity, as do brave soldiers in warfare."

[52]This is in contrast to non-Christians who would be ashamed of their malicious slander of the good lives of Christians (3:16).

[53]Michaels, 174.

[54]Seneca, *Ben.* 1.2.4-5.

> fact that they can fail to pay with impunity is made an additional source of indebtedness to him. And so let your thoughts follow this trend: `He has not repaid me with gratitude; what shall I do? Do as the gods, those glorious authors of all things, do; they begin to give benefits to him who knows them not, and persist in giving them to those who are ungrateful...Let us imitate them; let us give, even if many of our gifts have been given in vain; none the less, let us give to still others, nay, even to those at whose hands we have suffered loss.[55]

Such acts were characteristic of the gods. Those who continued to do good even when they were suffering loss were emulating the gods, and this was evidence of the "fine spirit" which they possessed.[56]

When Peter's exhortation to Christians in Asia Minor to do good to non-Christians while they suffer for doing good is read in the light of the ideals of Graeco-Roman society, it shows again Peter's deep concern that in their response to suffering, Christians should conduct themselves in a manner that would be recognised as good. This is consistent with Peter's injunction in 2:12.

While the good works of Christians corresponded to the good deeds of their high-minded non-Christian neighbours, there was to be an important distinction. Christians must always be ready to give an answer to anyone of the hope that was within them (3:16). They must be ready to proclaim the basis of their faith and their good works.

The use of ἀπολογίαν and αἰτεῖν λόγον may suggest a formal defence required in judicial proceedings against specific charges. However these words can also be used in a more general sense to denote a reply given in the face of misunderstanding or criticism.[57] Furthermore the object of this defence is "anyone," and is not restricted to emperors, governors and judges. Christians must be ready to give a defence for their faith and their conduct to any non-Christian, whether he be a representative of the governing authorities or a slave-master or a husband or a friend or a fellow citizen. The context of such defence would be the everyday interactions between Christians and non-Christians in society.

When Christians proclaim the reason for their hope, with gentleness and respect and a good conscience, then according to Peter, non-Christians who have spoken maliciously of their good works will be ashamed (3:16). This implies that the good works of Christians had

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[55]Seneca, *Ben.* 7.31.4-5. I owe this reference to Selwyn. See also *Ben.* 4.26.1; 28.1.

[56]Seneca, *Ben.* 7.32.1.

[57]Michaels, 188.

attracted mockery from non-Christians.

ἐν χριστῷ in 3:16 qualifies the good lives of the Christians, who have set apart Christ as Lord in their hearts (3:15). This distinguishes their good works from those of unbelievers. In 3:9-12 we saw that although Christians must treat their enemies according to the highest standard of Graeco-Romans, their motivation must be different. A similar point is being made here. The good works of Christians are those which non-Christians can see and recognise as good, but their motivation is different.

The phrase ὑμῶν τὴν ἀγαθὴν ἐν χριστῷ ἀναστροφήν in 3:16 recalls τὴν ἀναστροφὴν ὑμῶν ... καλήν of 2:12. But while the outcome in 2:12 appears to be in the future, in 3:16 the shame of non-Christians who speak maliciously of the good works of Christians is felt more immediately. Such shame was not unknown in Graeco-Roman society. For instance, Seneca writes that failure to return benefits is looked upon as "a disgrace, and the whole world counts it as such."[58] Dio expresses a similar sentiment when he declares that ingratitude towards benefactors is a serious offence.[59] Shame attended those who flouted social convention in rejecting and making a mockery of good done to them.

On the other hand, shame must not follow Christians in their suffering. When they suffer, it must be for doing good, and not for doing wrong. They must not be ashamed when they suffered as Christians (4:16), but must be ready to proclaim the hope that they had in Christ (3:15-16). They must praise God (4:16), and continue to do good (4:19).

5) Social Situation: Reality or Rhetoric?

Thus far we have seen that the social situation of the addressees of 1 Peter was one in which Christians faced hostility in their social relationships with non-Christians. Such hostility had arisen when Christians withdrew from participating in social and religious activities with non-Christians. If continued, this animosity would cause Christians to withdraw even more from non-Christian society. It was against this background Peter counsels Christians to remain in their social relationships, to do good to non-Christians, and to be willing to suffer for doing good.

Was Peter's depiction of the conflict between Christians and non-Christians a present

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[58]Seneca, *Ben.* 3.1.1. Conversely, to return benefits was honourable and commendable: *Ben.* 5.12.3-4.

[59]Dio, *Discourses* 31.25,27,29,37.

reality or was it part of his rhetoric? Leonard Thompson examines this issue in connection with the Book of Revelation, addressed to Christians in the province of Asia at the end of the first century CE.[60] He challenges the commonly held view that "the language of Revelation reflects and arises in a social, historical situation of crisis,"[61] which is tied to Domitian's reign of terror and his growing demands for imperial worship.

First, Thompson argues that the use of the apocalyptic genre is not limited to a particular situation of crisis. The genre can also be used in the case of "perceived crisis", which is "a way of saying that (1) the author of an apocalypse considers a situation to be a crisis but (2) that the crisis dimensions of the situation are evident only through his angle of vision."[62]

Secondly, he proceeds to show that Christians in Asia were not encountering any actual crisis during Domitian's reign. He rejects the negative picture of Domitian painted by the writings of Tacitus, Pliny, Dio Chrysostom, Suetonius and Dio Cassius. These authors, writing after Domitian's reign, painted a very negative portrait of Domitian, highlighting his abuses and ignoring his achievements. At the same time, Thompson observes, these writers have a very positive portrait of the emperor Trajan, emphasising his admirable qualities. This sharp contrast in the writers' depiction of Domitian and Trajan is treated by Thompson as a device employed by the writers to praise Trajan and to usher in the new era. To portray the break from the past, the writers must exaggerate both the ideal present and the evil past: "The sharper the contrast, the clearer the break and the more evident the new era."[63]

Then Thompson turns to evidence outside the Book of Revelation to show that Christians in Asia lived peaceably alongside their pagan neighbours in the cities.[64] He examines Christian writings in the second half of the first century and the early second century in order to sketch a picture of the social world in which Christians lived. He observes that Christians came from different strata of society and that they shared fully in urban Roman life, although there were important differences in moral goals and in the Christians' refusal to participate in idolatrous

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[60]L.L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (Oxford: OUP, 1990).

[61]Thompson, *Revelation*, 34.

[62]Thompson, *Revelation*, 28.

[63]Thompson, *Revelation*, 115.

[64]Thompson, *Revelation*, 95-167. Thompson makes only two references to 1 Peter; he does not mention 4:3-4 and other passages relating to conflict between Christians and non-Christians in 1 Peter.

worship.[65] He concludes that overt conflict between Christians and their non-Christian neighbours requiring official, legal action was rare.[66]

Thompson also examines the economic and political life in the cities of Asia at the end of the first century CE, and finds no indication of political unrest, widespread class conflict or economic crisis in Asian cities. He discusses briefly the imperial cult in Asia, and cautioned that the importance of the imperial cult for early Christianity should not be inflated.[67] The more important issue, according to Thompson, is the Christians' relation to adherents of traditional religious cults rather than their relation to the cult of the emperor. For Christians, what was as stake was the act of sacrifice itself, and not obeisance to the emperor.

Thompson's examination of the social, economic and political situation of Asia at the end of the first century CE leads him this conclusion:

> The writer of the Book of Revelation may urge his readers to see conflicts in their urban setting and to think of Roman society as 'the enemy,' but those conflicts do not reside in Asian social structures. The urban setting in which Christians worshipped and lived was stable and beneficial to all who participated in its social and economic institutions.[68]

Thompson then draws on Berger's sociology of knowledge to distinguish between "public knowledge", which can be gained from the Greek urban and Roman imperial institutions, and "revealed knowledge", which came through John's special revelation.[69] By transmitting his "revealed knowledge" which presented a very different view of first century Asian society and its institutions, John was challenging the "public knowledge" which was taken for granted in everyday Roman life. By depicting a world which sees Christians in conflict with the non-Christian, John "*encourages* his audience to see themselves in conflict with society."[70]

Thompson's assessment of the political, social and economic situation of Asia at the end of the first century CE is not without problems. The negative portrayal of Domitian by Pliny, Suetonius, Tacitus and others could not have been without basis as Thompson alleges. Yarbro Collins seems justified in her observation that the distortions are "distortions of actual fact,

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[65]Thompson, *Revelation*, 129.

[66]Thompson cites Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans saw them*, 48-67 and 1 Pet. 2:12 in support: *Revelation*, 132.

[67]Thompson, *Revelation*, 164.

[68]Thompson, *Revelation*, 167.

[69]Thompson, *Revelation*, 176-185.

[70]Thompson, *Revelation*, 174.

not total fictions."[71] Thompson's view of the imperial cult downplays its pervasive influence in the lives of ordinary people in society, and on Christians in particular.[72] While there might not have been any sustained official attack on Christians at the end of the first century CE, there was conflict between Christians and non-Christians which attracted official attention, as evidenced by Pliny's letter to Trajan.[73] Presumably there were other instances which did not catch the official eye. Thus Thompson's observation that Asian society at the end of the first century CE was stable and peaceful, and had no political unrest or economic crisis does not in itself preclude the presence of conflict between Christians and non-Christians on a more individual level.

Even if we were to accept that Thompson's conclusions are correct, or partly correct, we need not conclude that Peter, writing a few decades earlier, was also addressing a rhetorical situation. The situation in 1 Peter can be distinguished from that of Revelation. First, the genre of 1 Peter is different from that of Revelation. We have seen in chapter 3 that 1 Peter is paraenetic instruction intended for specific situations.[74] Christians in Asia Minor, faced with hostility from non-Christians, needed instructions on how to relate with non-Christians as well as with Christians. Paraenesis is aimed at real situations, and not at situations of "perceived crisis".

Secondly, we have seen that there is clear evidence of conflict between Christians and non-Christians in 1 Peter (1:6; 2:12,15,20; 3:6,16; 4:12-19), and that the hostility came from non-Christians in the household and in society, and not from official quarters. By setting the different social relationships in 1 Peter in their social contexts in part II of this thesis, I have highlighted the reality and intensity of the conflict between Christians and non-Christians.

In Revelation there appears to be two difficulties facing Christians. On the one hand, there is evidence of conflict between Christians and non-Christians. On the other hand, there is also evidence of lukewarmness and compromise on the part of Christians with their non-Christian environment. Christians appear to be so deeply entrenched in their economic relationships with

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[71]A.Y. Collins, "Book Review: *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and the Empire*," *JBL* 110 (1991) 749.

[72]See pp. 117-127. See also Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I.100-117.

[73]Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.

[74]Even though 1 Peter appears to have originated from Babylon (5:13), this does not make it apocalyptic. There is no condemnation of Babylon in 1 Peter as there is in Rev. 18.

non-Christians that there was an urgent call for them to dissociate themselves (Rev. 18:4-8).[75] The different messages to the seven churches, of encouragement and hope (e.g. to the church in Smyrna) on the one hand, and of warning (e.g. to the church in Laodicea) on the other, illustrate this clearly. Both situations seem to be envisaged in the letters to the church in Pergamum and Sardis.

This is unlike the situation in 1 Peter where the addressees are aware that they had spent enough time in sinful activities with non-Christians, and have withdrawn themselves from associating with them (4:3). It is in retaliation against this withdrawal that non-Christians began their smear campaign against Christians. In response to such conflict, Peter encourages his addressees to remain in the social relationships with non-Christians and to do good to them. It would be difficult to see how such exhortation would be appropriate in a situation where lukewarm Christians were assimilated to pagan lifestyle and there was no real conflict with non-Christians. We have seen in part II of this thesis that doing good by Christians was intended to disarm their critics and to win them over to the gospel.

7) Summary

The promise of blessing from God does not mean a life free of hostility and conflict with non-Christians. Peter knew that there would be times when Christians had to suffer, and he was anxious that they should suffer for the right reason. They should not suffer for doing evil, for this would bring shame and disgrace upon them. Instead they should suffer for doing good, and when they suffer, they should continue to do good and be prepared to give a defence to anyone who asks them for a reason for the hope which they possess.

In Part II of this thesis, we have examined the different relationships in 2:13-3:12 against their respective socio-historical settings, and have seen the intensity of the dilemma which Christians faced in their relationships with non-Christians. The conflict portrayed in 1 Peter is real, and not part of Peter's rhetorical strategy. It is unlike the situation in Revelation, ~~where~~ where ~~whose~~ the addreessees appear to have included Christians who were not in conflict with non-Christians, but who were in danger of compromising themselves as they enjoyed economic prosperity in their society. In such a situation, it might be appropriate for John to "encourage"

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[75]R. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993) 377. See also Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse*.

Christians in Asia to see themselves in conflict with non-Christians, as Thompson suggests. But this was not the situation in 1 Peter. Rather the addressees of 1 Peter were in danger of withdrawing further and further from their relationships with non-Christians, and Peter wrote to address this situation.

CONCLUSION

Our study began with a social portrait of the addressees of 1 Peter and their social setting. We saw that they were not all "resident aliens" and "transient strangers" who suffered social, economic, political and legal deprivation, as alleged by Elliott. Rather they were predominantly Gentiles from diverse geographical, social and economic backgrounds. Whether they were from urban or rural areas, whether they were slaves or free, men or women, rich or poor, they had one thing in common. They were all involved in social relationships.

Within these relationships, people participated jointly in social and religious activities. An examination of their pre-conversion activities as described in 4:3-4 showed that these activities took place in the context of their social relationships with one another, in voluntary associations, and in communal feasting and celebrations held in conjunction with festivals of the local deities and the practice of the imperial cult.

Conversion transformed these social relationships radically. Christians could no longer worship other gods or the emperor, and they could not participate in social and religious activities which were incompatible with their new beliefs (4:3). The outcome was inevitable. Christians withdrew from their participation in social and religious activities with non-Christians (4:4). After recovering from their surprise at this withdrawal, the non-Christians responded with their malicious accusations and slander (2:12, 15; 3:16; 4:4). At the same time, Christians became members of a new community, with a new identity as God's chosen people and with new relationships with other members of the community.

In this situation, Christians needed instruction on how to relate to other Christians and to non-Christians, and to maintain the right balance in these two sets of relationships. In his letter, Peter dealt with both concerns. The two main strands in 1 Peter deal with Christians' conduct in relationships between themselves (1:22-2:10; 3:7-8; 4:7-11; 5:1-11), and in relationships with non-Christians (1:13-21; 2:11-3:6; 3:9-4:5, 12-19).

A socio-scientific method was then applied in Chapter 2 to ask the question, "What kind of dynamics were at work among members of the Christian community, and between them and non-Christians?" The use of social network theory and social conflict theory gave us insight into the workings of a community which was in conflict with the larger social world. Upon

their conversion, Christians became members of a cluster, where internal density or the degree of connectedness betweeen members was high. On the other hand, external linkages with non-Christians in the larger society were drastically reduced because they had ceased from their social and religious activities with them. The presence of conflict in this situation tended to increase internal density and reduce external linkages even more, thus reinforcing the alienation of Christians from non-Christians. Applying social conflict theory, we saw that conflict enhanced internal cohesiveness of the group, and strengthened their boundaries against outsiders. This might lead eventually to total withdrawal of Christians from non-Christian society. In addressing this situation, Peter affirmed the internal solidarity of the Christian community on the one hand, and on the other hand, he exhorted them to remain in their social relationships with non-Christians and do good.

Peter's response to the social situation described above was further confirmed by our study of the literary genre of 1 Peter in Chapter 3, with a particular focus on its implications for social setting. Peter wrote a paraenetic letter to dissuade his readers from returning to their former participation in sinful activities with non-Christians, and to persuade them to remain in their relationships with non-Christians and do good. Paraenesis also had a social function, i.e., socialisation, and when viewed from this perspective, we saw that 1 Peter can be seen as an attempt to help Christians re-enter the larger pagan society, and also find their place in the new Christian community.

Against this socio-historical background we turned in Part II of this thesis to examine Peter's instructions in respect of Christian response to the hostile reactions of non-Christians. We saw that "doing good" was a predominant theme in 1 Peter, appearing only in passages pertaining to relationships between Christians and non-Christians (2:12, 15, 20; 3:6, 11, 13-14, 16-17; 4:19). The question then arose: What did Peter mean by "doing good"? Did he have a specific standard of good works in mind which he expected of Christians in 1 Peter? After a detailed investigation of good works in Jewish, Early Christian, and Graeco-Roman writings, we concluded that "doing good" in 1 Peter came closest to the meaning expressed in Graeco-Roman writings, and that the standard of good works was that of the highest standard of a man or woman in Graeco-Roman society. The motivation of Christians for doing good differed from that of the Graeco-Romans.

We also saw that there were some social conventions governing "doing good" in Graeco-

Roman society, which must have been familiar both to Peter and his readers. "Doing good" covered a wide and varied range of acts, which could be carried out by anyone, rich or poor, slave or free, man or woman. Anyone could be the beneficiary of good works, but this placed upon him or her a social obligation to return the benefit received. Failure to reciprocate would bring disgrace upon the ungrateful beneficiary. However this failure need not deter the benefactor from continuing to do good towards the ungrateful recipient.

Peter's exhortation to Christians to do good to non-Christians sprang from his hope that good works from Christians would bring about some reciprocity from non-Christians in accordance with their social conventions. Their good works would overcome the resistance and ignorance of unbelievers, and silence their malicious slander. Some might even be won over to the Christian gospel.

Underlying this was a more basic strategy to the social situation in 1 Peter. "Doing good" to non-Christians was Peter's response to a situation where Christians tended to alienate themselves more and more from non-Christians. In order to do good to non-Christians, they had to remain in their social relationships with them. Consequently this would check the increasing tendency of Christians to withdraw further from pagan society.

This strategy was demonstrated in our exegesis of 2:13-3:12 using a socio-historical approach. This achieved two purposes. First, each relationship was examined against its distinctive social background which affected the dynamics and tensions within the relationship. This revealed in a very vivid way the intensity of the dilemma which different groups of Christians faced in their relationships with non-Christians. The temptation to withdraw even further from non-Christians was evident from our study.

When Christians rejected the imperial cult, their loyalty to the emperor and their commitment to the wellbeing of their community were questioned. Christian slaves were regarded as insubordinate, and therefore bad, when they refused to do anything which was incompatible with their new faith. Christian wives were perceived as bad wives when they ceased to fulfil their special role in the worship of their husbands' household gods. This brought dishonour upon their husbands and their families. The withdrawal of Christians from the social and religious activities which they shared with their friends changed their friendships into enmities. It was in these difficult situations that Peter exhorted his readers to "do good".

Secondly a socio-historical approach showed that "doing good" meant different things in

different relationships. Acts of public benefaction by Christians, their obedience to the laws of the land, their submission to the emperor and respect for their fellow citizens would demonstrate their loyalty to the emperor and their commitment to the wellbeing of their community. Christian slaves would show themselves to be good slaves by their industry and hard work, faithful service, loyalty and goodwill, their willingness to serve their masters in difficult times, and to save them from grave danger, even at the expense of their own lives. By their submissiveness, good conduct, modesty and gentleness Christian wives would prove to be good wives, thereby restoring their husbands' honour. When Christians refused to repay evil with evil or insult with insult but chose to do all they could to benefit their non-Christian friends, they might turn enmity into friendship.

Thus Peter exhorted his readers to do good in the hope that their good works might disarm their critics and even win over some of them. He knew that social convention required reciprocity for the good deeds which Christians conferred on non-Christians. Thus in 3:13 he asks a clearly rhetorical question, "Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?" (3:13). Undoubtedly he expects a resounding "No one!" from his readers. However Peter was aware that just as there were those who did not conform to the social convention of reciprocity in their society, there were also those who would continue to abuse Christians for doing good. In such instances, he exhorted his readers to commit themselves to their faithful Creator and just Judge, and continue to do good.

All these "good works" required Christians to remain in their relationships with non-Christians. This would increase the external linkages between Christians and non-Christians. Coupled with this was high internal density within the Christian community. This was Peter's strategy of checking the growing tendency of Christians to withdraw from non-Christian society.

Our study has focused mainly on that part of the social world which the addressees of 1 Peter shared with non-Christians in society. We touched only briefly on relationships among members of their Christian community. How they related to one another - men and women, free and slave, rich and poor, elders and young men - must remain the subject of another study. In several recent studies there has often been the tendency to treat Christians as a homogeneous group, but we have seen in our study that viewing them in their different social roles and status has given us fresh insights into their relationships. A similar approach can

perhaps be used to examine relationships between Christians in 1 Peter. While it is true that on the one level there is neither male nor female, slave nor free, rich nor poor in Christ, yet on another level they came from different social backgrounds. Borrowing a term from psychology, Christians would have brought their social "baggage" into their Christian community. Peter's instructions to Christians on their relations with one another occupies the other half of the letter, and deserves careful study.

Our study has given us a fresh understanding of "doing good" in 1 Peter, and of its strategic use in overcoming hostile reaction from non-Christians. Does this have implications for other NT communities in conflict with non-Christians? How is Peter's view of "doing good" similar or different from that of the other NT writers? Our study dealt very briefly on this issue in our survey of good works in Chapter 4, and a more detailed investigation would be useful.

Finally with regard to method, our study has shown that there is no need for proponents of a socio-historical approach to view with suspicion those who use a sociological method. We have demonstrated that a great deal of benefit can come from using both methods hand in hand. They have been "concerned both with understanding from within and explaining from without; with the general and with the particular."[1] Future studies using both methods can show other ways in which they can complement one another to yield valuable insights into the social dimension of NT texts.

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[1]P. Burke, *Sociology and History* (London; Allen & Unwin, 1980) 30.

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